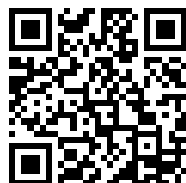


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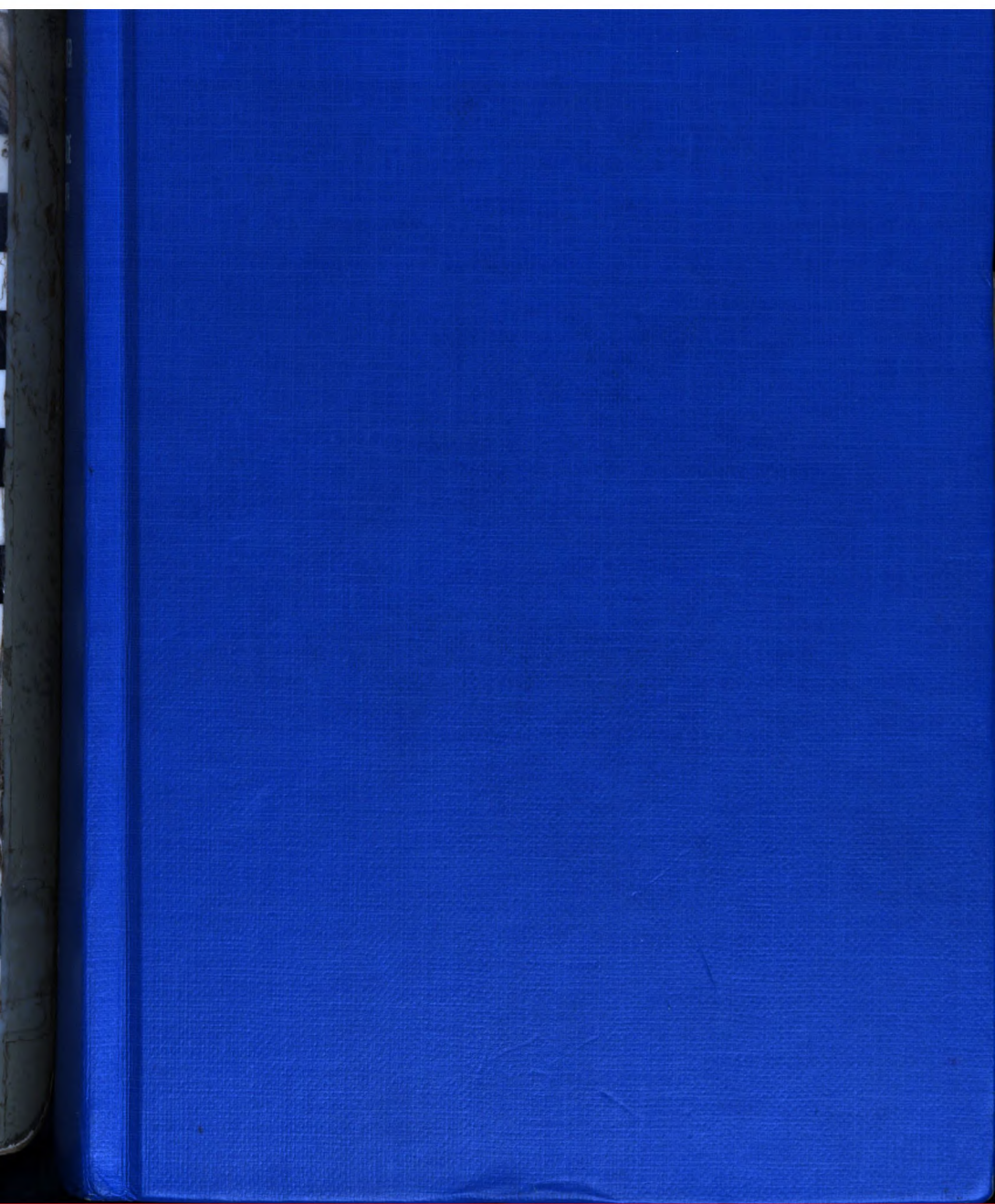
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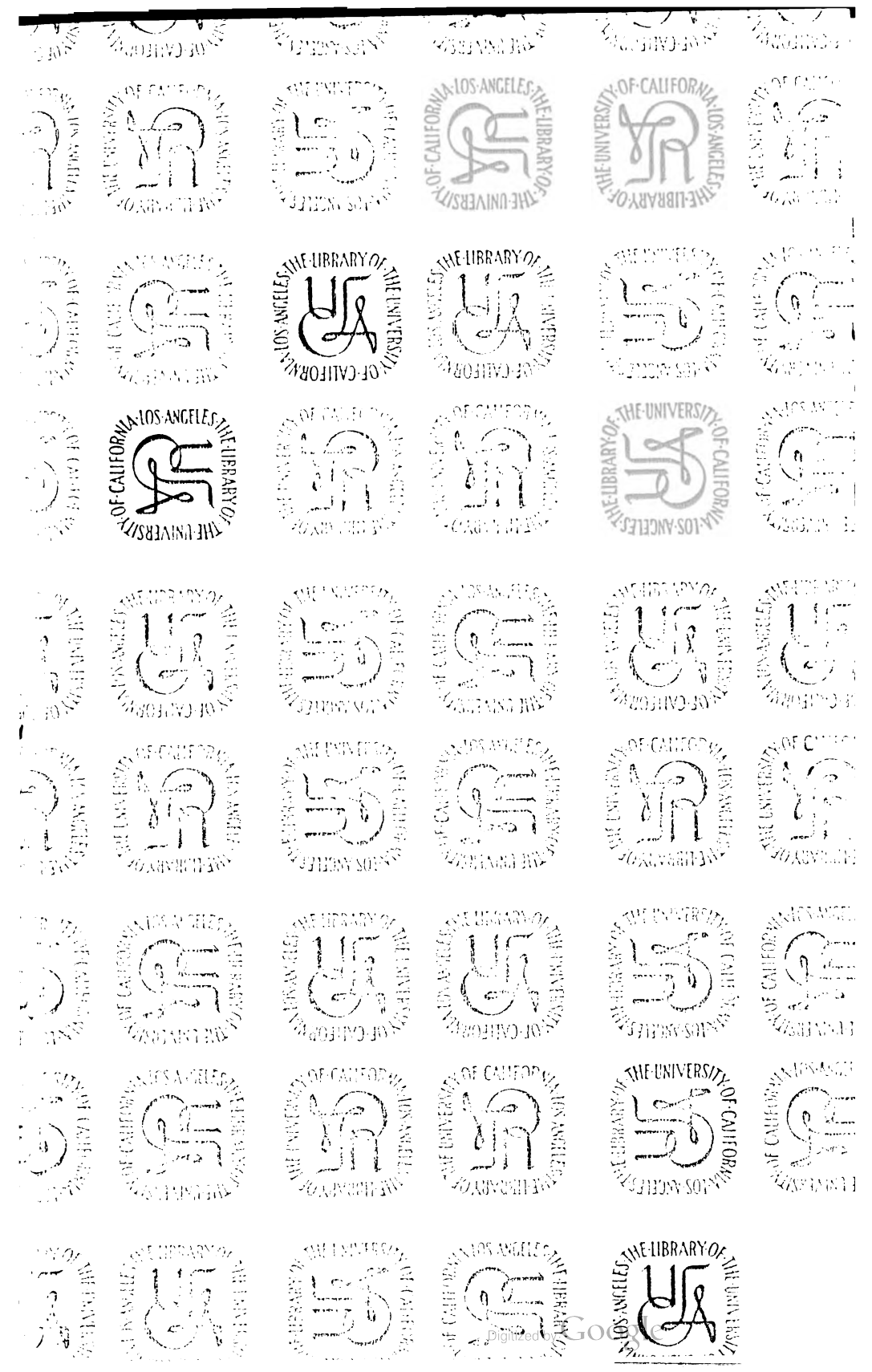




















**By the Same Author.**

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*AN OUTLINE OF THEOSOPHY.*  
*THE ASTRAL PLANE.*  
*THE DEVACHANIC PLANE.*  
*MAN VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE.*  
*INVISIBLE HELPERS.*  
*CLAIRVOYANCE.*  
*DREAMS.*  
*THE CHRISTIAN CREED.*  
*OUR RELATION TO CHILDREN.*

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# THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

SCIENTIFICALLY EXAMINED AND CAREFULLY  
DESCRIBED

BY  
C. W. LEADBEATER

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1903

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*Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;  
Never was time it was not; end and beginning are dreams !  
Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit forever;  
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it seems!*  
*The Song Celestial, Sir Edwin Arnold, p. 9.*



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# THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

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## CHAPTER I.

### SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DEATH.

Death is a subject which cannot but be of the deepest interest to every one, since the one thing which is absolutely certain in the future biography of all men alike is that one day they must die—still more since there is hardly any one except the very young from whose ken death has not already removed some dearly loved one. Yet though this is thus a question of such universal interest, there is perhaps none about which the misconceptions current in the popular mind are so many and so serious. It is impossible for us to calculate the vast amount of utterly unnecessary sorrow and terror and misery which mankind in the aggregate has suffered simply from its ignorance and superstition with regard to this one most important matter. There is amongst us a mass of false and foolish belief along this line which has worked untold evil in the past and is causing indescribable suffering in the present, and its eradication would be one of the greatest benefits that could be conferred upon the human race.

This benefit the Theosophical teaching at once confers on those who, from their study of philosophy in past lives, now find themselves able to accept it. It robs death forthwith of all its terror and much of its sorrow, and enables us to see it in its true proportions and to understand its place in the scheme of our evolution.

Let us take the most prominent of these misconceptions one by one, and endeavour to expose their fallacies. Some of them may be described as religious misconceptions, and their prevalence may be directly traced to the corruption of original Christian doctrine which has crept into our churches and destroyed so much of their vitality and usefulness. We will, however, leave those until later, and will first of all consider some of the widely spread popular delusions on this important subject.

People are sometimes inclined to think that after all it does not so very much matter if a man's ideas about death are distorted; when he dies, they say, he will find out the facts for himself, and if he has been mistaken he will soon realize it. Such a contention is defective in two ways; [it takes no account of the awful terror of death which from ignorance overshadows the lives of so many, nor of all the unnecessary sorrow and anxiety felt by the survivors about the fate of departed friends; and it ignores the fact that man after death very often does *not* immediately realize his mistakes, and correct them by the light of the truth—and that in consequence of his inability to do this, much trouble frequently arises.

### *Is Death the End ?*

The first and most fatal of all misconceptions about death is the idea that it is the end of all things; that there is nothing in man which survives it. Many people seem to be under the impression that this gross form of materialism has almost died out from among us; that it was a mental disease of the earlier part of the last century, and that the race has now outgrown it. It is much to be wished that this view represented the facts of the case, but I fear a careful student of contemporary thought can hardly endorse it. It is happily true that

this noxious weed of materialism no longer rears its head in high places with the confidence of yore, for the men whose opinion is worthy of attention have by this time learnt better than that. But there is still an immense mass of blank ignorance in the world, and, worse still, there is much of that most objectionable of all forms of ignorance which, having picked up a few scientific catch-words, inflates itself with aggressive self-conceit and believes itself in possession of the wisdom of the ages. Among the unfortunate beings who are suffering under that variety of mental thralldom there is even yet much of the crudest materialism.

Still we may certainly hope that any such feeling is declining, but I fear that can hardly be said of another less blatant but more insidious variety of the disease. There are many thousands of men and women who nominally profess some form of religion and would indignantly repudiate the suggestion that they were materialists, and yet for all practical purposes they live their lives precisely as though this world were the only one of which they had to think. They may sometimes use words and phrases implying the existence of another, but it never appears to enter in the slightest degree into the calculations upon which they base their conduct. This practical materialism, while less obviously idiotic than the other, and less offensive to the man's neighbours, yet produces much the same result in his condition after he has passed the portals of death.

Another and perhaps even more widely spread misconception is, that death is a plunge into the great unknown—that nothing can ever be learnt with any certainty as to the states into which man passes when he leaves this physical plane. Certainly various religious sects profess to give exceedingly precise information as

to these states, yet to the vast majority of their followers there seems to be a sense of absolute unreality about it all; at any rate, they neither act nor speak as though they really believed it. And indeed, in the case of most of these sects the information given is so wildly inaccurate that even if it were believed it is very doubtful whether it would not produce more harm than good.

*The Catholic Teaching.*

Among the forms of faith of our Western world the great Catholic Church stands alone in giving teaching upon the subject of the conditions beyond the grave which, though couched in a symbolism which has been misunderstood and materialized, nevertheless expresses the facts sufficiently to enable those who have accepted it to comprehend the position in which they find themselves after leaving the physical body. Even here, however, the truth is on the one side darkened by the false shadow of the blasphemous doctrine of eternal torment, and on the other side is deprived of much of its dignity by a ridiculous system of so-called indulgences. I presume that we may take the Catholic doctrine on the subject, stated very roughly, to be this—that while the hopelessly wicked man drops into hell, and the great saint is caught up immediately into heaven, as was the Blessed Virgin at her Assumption, the ordinarily good man still retains many faults and imperfections which unfit him to pass directly into the presence of God, and consequently needs a shorter or longer stay in an intermediate condition called purgatory, during which his various failings are eliminated by a comparatively short though painful process. It is only after being thus made perfect through suffering that he is ready to pass on into the joy of the heaven-world.

It will at once be seen by Theosophical students that this theory, in the form in which I have here stated it, corresponds very closely with the facts of the case. There comes a period in human development, though not for millions of years yet, where the man who has set himself steadily against progress *does* drop out—not, indeed, into an everlasting hell (for that is nothing but the ghastly invention of the disordered brain of some diabolical monster of human cruelty), but into a condition of comparatively suspended animation in which he awaits the advent of another scheme of evolution which offers him, in its earlier stages, an opportunity of advancement more within the limits of his feeble capacities.

He is simply in the position of a child who has been unable to keep pace with his classmates; he cannot work with them through the later and higher portion of the course of study appointed for the year, so he must wait until, at the beginning of the next school-year, another set of boys are commencing the studies which he failed to grasp. By joining them, and thus going over the same ground once more, he is enabled to succeed where previously he succumbed before the difficulties of the path. So that instead of the hideous lie of eternal damnation we have the merciful truth of æonian suspension. On the other hand, the highly developed soul, who during earth-life has gained complete control over his lower nature, and entirely dominated passion and desire, does in consequence sweep through the astral life with such rapidity that when he regains his consciousness he finds opening out before it the indescribable glory and bliss of the heaven-world.

But the ordinary man has by no means succeeded in entirely dominating all earthly desires and passions before his death. Thus he finds himself upon the astral

plane with a very fairly vigorous desire-body which he has made for himself during physical life, and in which he now has to live until the process of its disintegration is in turn completed. It disintegrates only as the desire which is its life dies out of it, and this often involves suffering which is not inaptly symbolized by the fires of purgatory.

### *The Truth About Purgatory.*

The often-quoted illustration of the drunkard, though of course an extreme case, shows very clearly the manner in which this system of purgation works. We know how terribly strong this drink-craving is—how when it seizes upon a man it overpowers all sense of decency, all his natural affection for those near and dear to him, so that he will leave his wife and children starving, and will even sell the very clothes off their backs in order to obtain the means to gratify his abominable appetite. When that man dies, his disposition is in no way changed by death; the horrible craving is as strong upon him as ever—nay, even stronger than ever at first, because the desire-vibration has no longer to set in motion the heavy physical matter. But since he has lost the physical body, by means of which alone he could achieve his desire, this craving must remain forever unsatisfied. It will be seen that we have there the elements of a very real purgatory, and that the symbol of the purifying fire is by no means an unsuitable one.

Happily, however, it is purgatory, and not hell—not the senseless, useless eternity of torment for the mere gratification of the cruel malignity of an irresponsible despot in which orthodox theology asks us to believe, but simply the necessary, the only effective and therefore the most merciful process for the elimination of the evil



desire. Terrible though the suffering may be, the desire gradually wears itself out, and only then can the man pass on into the higher life of the heaven-world. But because the desire is burnt out, the man is definitely freed from it, and he need not take up the burden of it again in his next incarnation unless he wills it.

The desire itself is dead, but there still remains the same weakness of character which made it possible for him to be subjugated by it. In his next life he will be born with an astral vehicle containing such matter as is necessary for the expression of the same desire—with, so to speak, an outfit which would enable him to repeat his last life in that respect. He receives that matter because in his last incarnation he sought it and made use of it; but though he is thus provided with it this time he is in no way bound to employ it in the same way as before. If from the result of his previous actions he should have the good fortune to find himself as a child in the hands of careful and capable parents, and so be trained to regard such desires as evil, and to gain control over them and repress them as they appear, then the matter which would have expressed them will remain unvivified and gradually become atrophied for want of use, as many of our physical muscles are.

The matter of the astral body is slowly but constantly wearing away and being replaced, precisely as is that of the physical body; and as this which is atrophied disappears, it will be replaced by matter of a more refined order which is incapable of responding to the strong, coarse vibrations of that grossly sensual desire, so that that particular abomination will become impossible to him. He will, in fact, have grown beyond it and finally conquered it, so that never again in all his long series of future lives will he repeat that mistake, for he has

now built into his ego the opposite virtue of complete self-control as far as that vice is concerned. Through the life of successful struggle against that desire the victory over it has been won; and now there is no longer a struggle, for he sees the vice in its true colours and it has not the slightest attraction for him. Thus the suffering on the astral plane which once seemed, and was, so terrible to him, has been in reality a blessing in disguise, since through it he has been enabled to gain this immense moral victory, to take this decided step upon the path of evolution; and so far as we can see there is no other method than that suffering by which this splendid result could possibly have been achieved.

Thus we see that there is a very real truth behind the doctrine of purgatory, and that when the abuse of pretended indulgences was swept away during that extraordinary outbreak of morbid matter from the ecclesiastical system which it is the fashion to call "the reformation," a very great deal that was beautiful, true and useful was cast aside as well.

### *Prayers for the Dead.*

One of our most serious losses at that time was the custom of prayer for the dead, and the nations who blindly threw away that means of helping their fellows have ever since paid the penalty of their folly in the persons of their departed members, who have had to fight their way unaided through the astral world, because their friends had persuaded themselves that it was wicked to try to assist them! Truly against stupidity even the Gods themselves fight in vain.

What is a prayer for the dead but an expression of an earnest wish and a loving thought for those who have passed on before us? We who study Theosophy know

well that in physical life such wishes and such thoughts are very real and objective things—storage batteries of spiritual force which will discharge themselves only when they reach the person towards whom they are directed; why should it be supposed that there is any difference in their action when the person thought of has no longer a physical body? The prayer or the strong loving wish for a particular dead person always reaches him and helps him, nor can it ever fail to do so while the great law of cause and effect remains part of the constitution of the universe. Even the earnest general prayer or wish for the good of the dead as a whole, though it is likely to be a vaguer and therefore a less efficient force, has yet in the aggregate produced an effect whose importance it would be difficult to exaggerate. Europe little knows what it owes to those great religious orders who devote themselves night and day to ceaseless prayer for the faithful departed.

If it should be asked what it is that we ought to wish for our dear ones who have passed away—we who in many cases know so little of their condition that we might well fear to set in motion a force which might be ill-directed for want of more exact knowledge of their need—we cannot do better than turn to the formulæ of the Catholic Church once more, and use that beautiful antiphon which appears so often in the services for the dead: "Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him." Unless we are dealing with a case in which we know of some special requirement towards which we can direct our thought-force, what better wish could we formulate than that expressed in those words of long ago, words which for many centuries have been the channel through which yearning affection has voiced its holiest feelings—by

which so much suffering has been eased, so much benefit given?

If we observe how exactly it meets the needs of the man who has recently passed away, we shall realize that whoever may have composed that antiphon must have known very well what he was about, or perhaps been guided from above to write even better than he knew. For its two clauses express exactly the conditions which are most desirable for the dead; first, perfect rest from all earthly thought and care, so that his progress towards the heaven-world may be undisturbed, and secondly, the perpetual light of the divine love shining clearly upon him through the higher and more spiritual part of his own nature, drawing him ever upward toward itself, so that his progress may be rapid. Truly earth has little more of assistance to give to a man for whom such a prayer as that is being earnestly and constantly offered.

We see, therefore, that religion (always excepting the doctrine of those sects which proclaim their separation from universally accepted truth by announcing themselves as "protestant") has done much for the help of the departed, and would also have done much, if it had been intelligently believed, towards correcting the wrong impressions current in the world with regard to death. Yet nevertheless it is responsible for certain special misconceptions of its own, as will be seen hereafter.

### *An Amazing Theory.*

A curious form of this delusion that nothing can be certainly known about after-death conditions is the opinion (which, absurd as it seems, is really held to my own knowledge by devout and earnest people) that man is not meant to know anything of this other world—that its secrets are a divine mystery which God has inten-

tionally hidden from the eyes of men, and that to pry into it is impious. Surely no more absolutely fatuous contention has ever been advanced; for if we find ourselves in possession of faculties to which that world lies open, can it be supposed that we are intended deliberately to blind ourselves to it? If we find at every turn, as we do, evidence of the existence of that world, and of the continued life of our friends there, are we to ignore all this and hide our heads in the sand like the ostrich? All the greatest saints of whom we know have spoken of this unseen world and described their visions of it and their experiences in connection with it; are we to suppose that they were all guilty of blasphemous curiosity when they examined, and of infidelity and treachery when they described, the truths of this higher life? But surely argument would be wasted in refuting so obviously foolish an idea as this.

If we find that many among us are able to see this inner world—if it is even a mark of a certain kind of development to be able to see it—then we know that this faculty is the heritage of all our brothers, that one day all mankind will see as some of us see now, and consequently that the acquirement of such sight is simply an incident of man's evolution, and a definite part of the great scheme of the universe—a development to be welcomed and made good use of, not to be regarded as abnormal and impious. All the more certain are we of this fact when we see the results which follow the possession of this faculty, when we see that to know the truth by its means removes from a man all fear of death on his own account, all anxiety and unrest with regard to the condition of his departed friends; above all when we realize that he who holds this knowledge can be infinitely more useful to those who have passed away than

is the ignorant man. We see that always much good, and never aught of evil, comes from the fuller knowledge and the wider hope with which the higher vision endows us; and we know there can be nothing wrong in that which brings us nearer to the eternal truth which is behind all these forms of manifestation.

### *The Terror of Death.*

Directly connected with, and to a great extent caused by, this delusion that nothing can be known of the world beyond the grave, is the terror of death which is so serious a factor in the lives of many. This is not a matter which is commonly spoken of, but any man who is in a position, such as that of a priest, which admits him to the inner confidence of large numbers of people, will be aware that there are those to whom this ever-haunting dread is a very real and terrible thing, a spectre present with them at every feast, and rarely leaving them an hour's peace or freedom.

Naturally, too, the man who so fears death for himself fears it for his friends also, and when they pass away from him he not only sorrows for the separation, but in addition is full of misery and anxiety as to their probable fate. The knowledge of the real facts about death at once destroys both the terror and the anxiety; the man who is instructed upon these points recognizes death as but an incident in life, and realizes that the existence upon the other side is no more to be dreaded than is that upon this side. The dread is inspired not so much by the definite expectation of anything appalling, as by the feeling of dim uncertainty, the horror of a vacant abyss. When this is replaced by definite knowledge as to the astral world, man regains his confidence and is prepared to face with equanimity whatever fate



may be in store for him. The recognition that the higher worlds are governed by exactly the same laws as this which we know at once brings them into closer touch with us, and makes us feel more at home with them; it is, in fact, in other words, the certainty that in all worlds alike we are in the hands of the same divine power, and that consequently we and our loved ones also are equally safe in all.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE EVIDENCE FOR CONTINUED LIFE.

It is indeed strange that this erroneous view of death as "the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns," should be so widely spread and so firmly rooted among us. When we remember that, in every country of the world and at all periods of history of which we know anything, travellers have been constantly returning from that bourn, it becomes more and more difficult to account for this extraordinary popular delusion.

It is true that these remarkable misconceptions are to a large extent peculiar to ourselves, and constitute one of the products of that particular form of civilization of which we are wont to be so proud. Since Europe is the fatherland of all these later sub-races which dominate the earth by means of military power, by commercial prosperity, by scientific discovery and mechanical invention, it is perhaps not unnatural that Europe should come to regard itself as the world, and its opinions and doctrines as alone worthy of consideration. Yet it is nevertheless true that it is only a very small corner of the earth and that we are as yet but a very young race, possessing indeed the vigour of youth, but also much of its arrogance and many of its crudities. It is not infrequently our custom to seek to cover our own blank ignorance of certain subjects with the confident assertion that nothing ever has been or can be really known about them; and our treatment of this question of the life after death is one of the worst examples of this habit.

If popular theology had not most unhappily altogether lost sight of the cardinal doctrine of reincarnation, its views on this subject of death would naturally be entirely different. A man who realizes that he has died many times before regards the operation more philosophically than one who believes it to be an absolutely new experience fraught with all kinds of vague and awful possibilities. In this sense it is true that all travellers return from that bourn, though the more evolved of them do not usually reappear until after a period of fifteen hundred years or so. But in quite another sense and after a much shorter interval travellers have constantly returned for various reasons, and have been called apparitions.

### *Apparitions.*

There was a time not many years ago when it was fashionable to ridicule any one who had had the good fortune to meet face to face an inhabitant of the world usually unseen, and though such experiences were presumably no less common then than now, those who encountered them naturally kept them to themselves if they valued their reputation as sane members of a materialistic society. Within the last few years, however, a salutary change has come over public opinion in this respect. To sneer at psychic phenomena is now recognized as showing not intellectual vigour but ignorance and assumption. When there exists a Society for Psychical Research which numbers among its members well-known scientists like Sir William Crookes and Sir Oliver Lodge, and public men like Mr. Arthur Balfour, and when that society issues huge volumes of learned reports upon such phenomena and considers them worthy of careful and prolonged investigation, it is no longer safe for any one

who wishes to be in the fashion to raise the silly and antiquated parrot-cry of "superstition."

Impartial enquiry into the subject of apparitions shows us that from all countries of the world there come well-attested accounts of the occasional return of the dead. Such visitors have rarely given much information with regard to the world from which they came, though a good deal may be inferred from collation and comparison of the various stories. But at any rate the mere fact that man does survive the process called death is proved for any fair-minded investigator by these accounts alone.

As Mr. W. T. Stead remarks in the introduction to his *Real Ghost Stories*:

"Of all the vulgar superstitions of the half-educated, none dies harder than the absurd delusion that there are no such things as ghosts. All the experts, whether spiritual, poetical, or scientific, and all the others, non-experts, who have bestowed any serious attention upon the subject, know that they do exist. There is endless variety of opinion as to what a ghost may be. But as to the fact of its existence, whatever it may be, there is no longer any serious dispute among honest investigators. If any one questions this, let him investigate for himself. In six months, possibly in six weeks, or even in six days, he will find it impossible to deny the reality of the existence of the phenomena popularly entitled ghostly. He may have a hundred ingenious explanations of the origin and nature of the ghost, but as to the existence of the entity itself there will no longer be any doubt."

### *Spiritualism.*

Another way in which many travellers have returned is through the use of the means provided by modern

spiritualism. I am well aware that there has been much fraud and deception in this connection, but I also know from personal investigation that there is truth to be found along these lines by the patient and indefatigable seeker. Unless specially trained in the higher clairvoyance, however, the enquirer is very much at the mercy of various masquerading entities, and this line of research is surrounded by pitfalls into which the unwary may very readily stumble. I hope later to devote some pages to a careful analysis of some of the phenomena of spiritualism, but for the present my point is that here is another source from which information as to the life after death is to be obtained by those who are willing to take some trouble in looking for it.

It may be said that any value which spiritualistic testimony may possess is largely discounted by the fact that it is not always consistent—that the accounts given by spirits at various times and places have differed considerably. This is quite true, and I am by no means suggesting that all spirit evidence is equally worthy of acceptance. But I do say that in very many cases the communicating entity is telling the truth as far as he knows it, and that the difference between the statements made by two such entities is often due to the fact that both of their views are partial, and not to any wilful deception practised by either of them.

For example, most of those who speak through mediums in England and America describe the after-death state as a progressive life in a "summerland," which is in fact only a glorified reproduction of the earth, and so far as they give any religious teaching it is always a kind of Christianity-and-water—certainly wider and less rigid than the orthodox idea, though usually very much vaguer, but still distinctly Christian in tone. One gets

so used to this that I remember it was quite a surprise to me when I attended my first séance in Ceylon to find that all the communicating entities were Buddhists, and that beyond the grave they also had found their religious preconceptions confirmed, exactly as had the members of various Christian sects over here. But differences such as these become easily comprehensible when we understand that after death, as before, like attracts like, and that people of the same race, religion or caste will keep together and remain apart from the rest of humanity in that world as in this.

*A More Certain Method.*

While it is no doubt true that much information upon the subject of the states after death is to be obtained by collating the evidence given by various apparitions and through spiritualistic mediums, yet there is a far more definite and satisfactory method by means of which we may acquaint ourselves with every detail of the life of this other world—in so far, that is, as it is possible for us to comprehend it while still upon the physical plane. It is perfectly possible for man while still what we call alive to penetrate into this other world, to investigate it at his leisure, to communicate with its inhabitants and then to return into our present state of existence and describe what he has seen. How it happens that this is a possibility, I will now proceed to explain.

This physical body, with which we think ourselves so well acquainted, is not the only vehicle through which the soul of man can express itself, nor are its senses the only avenues through which information from the outer world can reach him. As St. Paul long ago remarked, "there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body;" and though, when he said that, he may not improbably

have been referring to a portion of the constitution of man which, we, as Theosophists, should place upon a level considerably higher than the astral, yet his words are very appropriate as describing this lower stage also. For it is true that every man has within himself a subtle body in addition to this physical one; indeed, a careful analysis shows that the soul possesses several vehicles, one within or behind the other, and that each of these has its own senses or methods of perception suitable to the plane of nature to which it corresponds.

The theory of the planes of nature will need no explanation for the Theosophical student; but one who is approaching the teachings of the Wisdom-Religion for the first time must endeavour as a preliminary to its study to realize the existence within our solar system of a series of perfectly definite interpenetrating planes or worlds, each having its own matter of different degrees of density—the whole of this physical world which we ordinarily perceive being only one of these planes, and the lowest of them. It is certain that man contains within himself various grades of matter drawn respectively from each of the planes upon which his evolution is at present taking place; and just as the habitual activity of his physical senses enables him to receive impressions from the physical universe, so does the activity of his subtler senses, when they are once awakened, enable him to receive impressions from the worlds of subtle matter which surround him on all sides.

When at death the true ego or soul of the man is finally disconnected from his physical body, he proceeds to adapt himself to his new conditions and learns to use the senses of that next vehicle of his, which we have called the astral body. This enables him to recognize that astral world which lies next above or rather within

the physical, and is nearest to it in the density of its matter. In order, therefore, to see and share in this earlier part of the life beyond the tomb, all that is necessary for us is to learn how to use these astral senses during our earthly life.

The power of objective perception upon all the planes undoubtedly lies latent in every man, but for most of us it will be a matter of long and slow evolution before our consciousness can function in those higher vehicles. With regard to the astral body the matter is however somewhat different, for in the case of all the cultured people belonging to the more advanced races of the world, the consciousness is already perfectly capable not only of responding to all vibrations communicated to it through astral matter, but also of using its astral body definitely as a vehicle and instrument.

#### *Our Condition during Sleep.*

It is not only at death that the man separates himself from his physical vehicle and uses his astral body, for he passes through this experience every time that he sinks to sleep, although the link between the two remains unbroken, so that he can very readily be recalled to this plane. In fact, in all ordinary cases this withdrawal of the astral body is what constitutes the sleep of the physical; for naturally it is not the man himself who sleeps, but only his body. Such cultured people as we have mentioned have at the present time their astral senses very fairly developed, so that if they were sufficiently aroused to examine the realities which surround them during sleep, they would be able to observe them and learn much from them. But in the vast majority of cases they are not so aroused, and they spend most of their nights in a kind of brown study, pondering deeply



over whatever thought may have been uppermost in their minds when they fell asleep. They have the astral faculties, but they scarcely use them; they are certainly awake on the astral plane, and yet they are not in the least awake *to* the plane, and are consequently conscious of their surroundings only very vaguely, if at all.

They have behind them the tradition of the immortal custom of a long series of lives in which the astral faculties have not been used, for these faculties have been gradually and slowly growing inside a shell, something as a chicken grows inside the egg. The shell is composed of the great mass of self-centred thought in which the ordinary man is so hopelessly entombed—a wall of his own making so dense that he practically knows nothing of what is going on outside. Occasionally, but very rarely, some violent impact from without, or some strong desire of his own from within, may tear aside this curtain of mist for the moment and permit him to receive some definite impression; but even then the fog closes in again almost immediately, and he dreams on unobservantly as before. In the far-distant future the slow but sure evolution of the man will gradually dissipate the curtain of mist, so that he will become conscious by degrees of the mighty world of intensely active life which surrounds him. Or he himself, having learnt the facts of the case, may by steady and persistent effort from within clear away the mist and gradually overcome the inertia resulting from ages of inactivity. This is merely the hastening of the natural process, and will be in no way harmful if the man's development is proceeding with equal rapidity along other lines. But if he should gain this awakening without having attained at the same time the strength, knowledge and moral development which would naturally have preceded it, he would

be liable to the double danger of misusing such powers as he might acquire, and of being overwhelmed by fear in the presence of forces which he could neither understand nor control.

*The Training for Observation.*

A man who is put under definite occult training is usually taught at an early period to shake off this habit of thought, and learn to see the new and beautiful world around him, in order that he may be able intelligently to work in it. Even then it does not necessarily follow that he will be able to bring over into his waking consciousness any recollection of his astral experiences. This question of remembrance depends upon the power of carrying the consciousness through unbroken from one plane to the other—an achievement entirely unconnected with that other power to function freely upon the higher plane. But in course of evolution this also comes, and the man begins to be able to use his astral consciousness at the same time with the physical, so that he has the benefit of the use of the senses and powers belonging to it during waking life as well as when he is asleep. When he has arrived at this stage he is able continuously to perceive all around him those whom we call the dead, and so he can study at his leisure the conditions of their life. Thus he is in a position to supply any amount that may be desired of accurate and most detailed information as to this existence beyond the tomb; and it is from the accounts of such observers that we may obtain the fullest and most satisfactory ideas of that other world.

It is true that his observations afford direct proof to himself only; but even for others his statements are evidence as far as they go, and they have at least the value that they claim to be first-hand and based upon

direct personal observation. When it is found that a number of such investigators are constantly in the habit of making separate investigations and then comparing notes, and that broadly they always agree on all points of importance, the evidence seems considerably strengthened. When it is further found that their investigations fully confirm and even in some cases explain the teaching given on these subjects in all the older religions of the world, it is evident that a very strong case is made out in their favour, and it would be foolish to refuse to allow them full weight in the discussion on such subjects. We see that the hypothesis which they present is the only one which satisfactorily includes and accounts for all the various kinds of psychic phenomena which are continually presenting themselves for our study; and as has already been shown, there is nothing in the older and truer doctrines of Christianity which in any way conflicts with this teaching.

Naturally, for those students of Theosophy who are constantly engaged in work upon the astral plane, its existence is as absolutely a matter of fact and of everyday experience as is that of the physical; and thus there are among us an ever increasing body of people for whom these things are no longer a matter of speculation, but of knowledge. The broad facts which they learn in this way have already been indicated, and it will be seen that they are of the most encouraging character, for they show death as merely an incident in an immortal life—an incident in no way to be mourned or dreaded, but on the contrary to be accepted as a passage into a higher and truer existence.

## CHAPTER III.

### RELIGIOUS MISCONCEPTIONS.

We come now to a class of misconceptions about death which may reasonably be attributed specially to religion. They are due not in the least to Christianity proper, but to our absurd modern materialization of it. I have already referred to the crude doctrine of the instantaneous passage of the deceased into an eternal heaven or hell which is held by some of the obscurer sects—an idea which has done a great deal of harm in various ways, and from its obvious absurdity has caused a considerable amount of practical unbelief. It was so clearly impossible that such an arrangement could be a fair one that people who professed to accept it found one of two alternatives forced upon them. Either the whole thing became misty and meaningless, and men trusted in comfortless uncertainty to what they called uncovenanted mercies—which meant that they vaguely hoped that their deity might after all be kinder than their dogmas allowed; or else they adopted an unphilosophical theory of a sudden and complete change at the moment of death, whereby the departed immediately lost all his evil qualities and became an angel, and so was fit for heaven—or on the other hand (though of this usually little was said) he presumably dropped any fragments or reflections of good that may have clung about him, and blossomed forth into a full-grown demon.

It seems almost unnecessary to point out how foolish and erroneous such a doctrine is. Nature plays no conjuring tricks, and with her all progress is gradual; if the

undesirable is to be eliminated, or the weak made strong, these processes must take place step by step, little by little—naturally (as we very truly put it) and by normal growth, not miraculously and by supernatural intervention. As a matter of fact we find that death makes absolutely no change whatever in the nature of a man; what he was the day before his death, that precisely and neither more nor less he is the day after his death. If he has been spiritually-minded, full of devotion, or of magnificent intellect during life, then he possesses all these characteristics after death also; if on the other hand he has been mean and narrow, full of base thoughts and sensual desire upon this plane, he loses none of these evil qualities in his passage through the portals of the grave. The fact is that death does not affect the real man in the slightest degree; the putting aside of the physical body no more alters his nature than does the removal of his overcoat. When a man realizes this he at once sees that death falls into line with all the other processes of nature of which we know anything; he feels that he need waste no time in expecting some miraculous metamorphosis, but that he has to build himself up slowly and steadily into that which he wishes to be, for he is working under an eternal and immutable law which, though on the one hand it gives nothing without effort, yet on the other hand never fails to reward effort with mathematical exactitude. He has brought his unseen world out of the imagined domain of caprice into the recognized realm of universal law, and thus he knows exactly upon what he has to rely.

#### *Preparation for Death.*

Our religion has unwittingly done us another evil turn in attaching such exaggerated importance to the necessity of a special preparation for death. The Church, as

ever, is wiser and more tolerant than the sects; she strongly recommends the administration of various sacraments when they can be had, but forbears to pass adverse judgment upon a man simply because he happens to die out of her reach. Many of the sects, however, make the man's eternal welfare depend absolutely upon the state of his mind at the moment of death; if he is "saved," or "in a state of grace" at that particular instant, he may be regarded as booked through for the Elysian Fields—if otherwise, the less said about his subsequent condition the better. This extraordinary theory of salvation by hysteria—salvation by feeling oneself "saved"—is perhaps one of the most astonishing aberrations of the human intellect, if indeed we can suppose intellect of any kind to be engaged in such a superstition at all.

This strange delusion is peculiarly cruel in its effects, for if a man dies suddenly and away from home (as, for example, a soldier in battle) it is obviously impossible for his relations to be certain of his state of mind at the moment of death, and thus much utterly unnecessary fear and anxiety is caused. As usual with popular superstitions, there is a tiny grain of truth at the bottom of this curious idea, but it is by no means large enough to bear the immense superstructure which has been erected upon it.

The only preparation for death that is of any real use or importance is a well-spent life. If a man has that behind him, it matters very little of what he happens to be thinking at the moment when a bullet strikes him; if he has not that to serve as a basis for his future, he cannot hope to change that future by a spasmodic death-bed repentance. Of course a man who has gone wrong must turn round and come back some time; and if the shock of impending death causes him to do that—well, that is so much the better. It will not alter the karma which he

has to work out; but if in the next world he perseveres in his good resolutions, it will very decidedly alter the way in which he takes that karma, and will also affect the additions which he will make to his stock in the future.

It would not be correct to say that the last thought in the mind before death is absolutely unimportant; on the contrary, in the case of an undeveloped person it may assume considerable importance. It will be remembered that Theosophy attaches great weight to the last definite thought in a man's mind before he goes to sleep, because at our present state of evolution we often spend almost or even quite the entire night in revolving and considering it. Naturally with a person who was fully awakened to the astral plane this would matter less, as he would have the power of turning readily from one thought to another, and so could leave at will the subject which he was examining when he fell asleep. The general trend of his thought would be the important thing in his case, for equally during the day and during the night his mind would be likely to move in its accustomed fashion.

Just so in the case of ordinarily evolved people it would be the general tone of the mind during earth-life that would give the key to its probable working during astral life, and the particular idea which occupied it at the moment of transition from one state to the other would not matter much. But with some quite undeveloped ego, whose astral consciousness was still very vague and inchoate, the importance of that last thought might be very much greater, as his mind would probably be occupied with it for a long time, and it would change only very gradually. Thus it would to some extent set the keynote to which a good deal of his astral life might be tuned, and so it would certainly be worth while taking some trouble to see that it was a good one.

*The Death of the Soldier.*

No one, however, need ever have the slightest doubt or hesitation with regard to the fate of the man who dies unselfishly at the call of duty. His future, like that of every one else, will depend upon his life, and not upon his death; yet that death cannot but be a very potent factor in his evolution. The very fact that he has developed sufficient heroism to die for what is to him an abstract idea means very great advancement from his previous position. Whether the cause in which he is fighting be in the abstract right or wrong, simply does not affect the case; he thinks it to be right, to him it is the call of duty, the voice of his country, and he is willing to cast aside all selfish considerations, and obey it even in the face of certain death. Observe that it is in the last degree unlikely that the type of man from whom our private soldier is drawn would in his ordinary home life have any opportunity of developing such magnificent courage and resolution as he gains on the battle-field, and you will begin to see that, in spite of its horrors, war may nevertheless be a potent factor in evolution at a certain level. This, again, is the grain of truth at the back of the idea which possesses the Muhammadan fanatic, that the man who dies fighting for the faith goes straight to a very good life in the next world.

Nevertheless, though in certain cases death on the battle-field may do more for a man's evolution than continued life would, there is reason in a general way in the prayer of the Church, "From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us." When a man lives out his life to old age most of his lower desires are naturally worn out and cast aside even before he leaves this physical plane, and there is consequently so much the less to be done in the astral life.



A long illness often produces much the same effect, but the man who dies suddenly in the full flush of youth finds himself in a very different case. In him the desires are strong and active, and, therefore, other things being equal, he is likely to have a much longer astral life. At the same time, if he learns to use that life well, it may be productive of much more good karma than he would have been able to make in the same time on the physical plane, so that there are always two sides of the account to take into consideration.

In some cases the man who is suddenly thrown out of physical life on to the astral plane remains for a long time unconscious in a sleep filled with rosy dreams, as it was expressed in one of the early teachings given to us. In other cases he is conscious immediately and continuously, and it is not always easy to follow the workings of the laws according to which these variations take place. As a general rule it may be said that his state depends largely upon the direction in which his consciousness has been used to working. Most young men, for example, would have in their astral bodies a good deal of the lowest matter of the plane, yet if they had learnt in good time to keep in check sensual desire of various kinds, their consciousness would not be in the habit of functioning through such matter. In the re-arranged astral body that matter would be outside, and would therefore be the only channel open to external impressions. The man, however, not being used to receiving this order of vibrations, could not suddenly develop the faculty, and would therefore be happily unconscious of all the unpleasantnesses of that lowest sub-plane.

Another compensation which comes to the victim of sudden death, either in battle or by accident, is the special ministration always accorded to such cases by the band

of invisible helpers. It is stated that such work was in earlier periods attended to exclusively by a high class of non-human entities; but for some time past those human beings who are able to function consciously upon the astral plane have been privileged to render assistance in this labour of love. Such help is more especially needed in the case of these victims of sudden death, not only because they have so much stronger an astral body to manage, but also because in many cases they are naturally very much startled and even sometimes very seriously alarmed. The business of the helper is therefore to reassure and console them, and to explain to them as far as is possible the condition in which they find themselves and the course of action which is most desirable for them. All experience of these higher planes shows us that in all possible cases we may depend upon finding that the scheme of Nature provides as fully as may be for all contingencies, so that in spite of the difficulties which seem to us to be so constantly arising in the path of our progress, the real fact is that everything is arranged to help us and not to hinder us, and that the great laws are intended to facilitate our advance and not to delay it. Whenever hindrance arises it is invariably the result of man's interference with, or misconception of, the divine scheme; and when we once get behind the temporary confusion of these lower planes we realize the truth of the old saying, that all things work together for good for them that love Him.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD DEATH.

In discussing the various popular and religious misconceptions with regard to death, I have naturally to a considerable extent indicated the attitude held towards it by students of Theosophy. From our point of view we cannot but look upon it as a matter of much less importance to the soul of man than it is commonly supposed to be. To the average man of Western birth physical life seems to present itself as a straight line beginning abruptly at birth, and cut off again with equal abruptness at death. To us, however, even if for the moment we consider one incarnation only, the physical existence appears rather as a very small segment of a very large circle, birth and death being nothing more than the points at which the circumference of that circle crosses a certain straight line which marks the boundary between the physical and astral planes.

Our knowledge of the pre-natal part of the journey of the soul in the course of its descent into incarnation is perhaps hardly sufficient as yet to enable us to construct accurately to scale a diagram symbolizing even its average movement. But if such an attempt were made it is evident that that journey would have to be indicated by a closed curve starting from the ego and returning to it after its passage through the lower worlds. The ego in its causal vehicle would be represented by a point or a star in the higher division of the mental plane, and the curve indicating the course of the partially-detached personality would pass down first into the lower division of

that plane, then across the line which marked the upper limit of the astral plane, and, after traversing all the subdivisions of that world, would dip for a very small portion of its length below the line separating the astral from the physical, ascending again afterwards through the various planes and sub-planes to the point from which it started. We could not accurately represent this course by a true circle (that is, if equal portions of the circumference were taken, as they should be, to indicate equal periods of time), because the descent into incarnation seems usually to be so much more rapid than the ascent which follows it; but at least the line would be always a curve—it would contain no angles, for that which it symbolizes is an orderly progression with no abrupt changes of direction.

However, suppose for the moment that we draw it as a circle, what proportion of the circumference of that circle must be allowed to dip below the line which divides the physical plane from the astral? A little calculation will show that the portion representing the physical life must not be more than one-thirtieth of the whole, and may in many cases be considerably less than that; and it is only when we realize this fact clearly that we are beginning to understand a little of the true proportion which the physical bears to the non-physical even at so material an epoch of the world's history as this.

#### *The Really Important Point.*

There is no reason whatever to regard the special points in that circumference at which it happens to enter and leave the physical plane as more important than any others. On the contrary, the only point of real importance is one which is situated between those two—the point of greatest distance from the ego, after passing

which the course of the curve is upwards instead of downwards. This should typify the time in a man's life when the affairs of this world cease to engross him, when he definitely turns his thought to higher things; and it is evident that that is a much more important point in his life-cycle than either physical birth or death, for it marks the limit of the out-going energy of the ego—the change, as it were, from his out-breathing to his in-breathing.

Clearly if the curve were regular that change would take place at the middle of the physical life. The man would come to it gradually, almost imperceptibly, as part of the circular movement, just as a planet arrives at its aphelion, but the position of the point which indicates it ought to be equidistant from the points of birth and death. It is significant that this agrees exactly with an arrangement made by the wisdom of the ancients in the East. By that old rule a man was to spend the first twenty-one years of his life in education, and the next twenty-one in doing his duty as householder and head of the family; but then, having attained middle life, he gave up altogether his worldly cares, resigned his house and property into the hands of his son and retired with his wife into a little hut near by, where he devoted the next twenty-one years to rest and spiritual converse and meditation. After that came the fourth stage of perfect isolation and contemplation in the jungle if he wished it; but the middle of life was the real turning-point. It may be remembered also that in ancient Peru forty-five was the age at which a man was released from all worldly obligations and left free to devote himself entirely to whatever line of study most attracted him.

Here in the West our life has become so unnatural than even in old age many men eagerly carry on the turmoil and the competition of worldly business, and so their

physical life is ill-proportioned and its machinery all out of gear. The work of purification and detachment which should have begun in middle life is left until death overtakes them, and has therefore to be done upon the astral plane instead of the physical. Thus unnecessary delay is caused, and through his ignorance of the true meaning of life the man's progress is slower than it should be.

*The Advantage of Knowledge.*

Great as is the harm that often results from ignorance of these facts during life, it is perhaps even more serious after death. Hence the enormous advantage gained by one who has even only an intellectual appreciation of occult teaching on this subject. He realizes the true proportion between the physical fragment of life and the rest of it, and so he does not waste all his time here in working only for one-thirtieth of his cycle of personality and utterly neglecting the other twenty-nine, but regards his life as a whole and lives it intelligently. When he reaches the astral plane he is no way alarmed or disconcerted, for he understands his surroundings and knows how to make the best use of the conditions in which he finds himself. This knowledge gives him courage and confidence instead of bewilderment and fear; it endows him with capacity and resourcefulness in a world where otherwise he would be helpless as a rudderless vessel.

Experience has shown that even in the case of a man who has only once heard the truth stated (say in a lecture) and, regarding it simply as one hypothesis among many, has not been sufficiently impressed to induce him to follow up the study, even in such a case a considerable advantage has been attained. Such an one, though he has neglected the opportunity of gaining fuller information which offered itself to him, yet remembers that he once

heard a certain doctrine taught, and because he finds that the speaker was accurate as to questions of fact, he bestirs himself to recall what directions as to conduct accompanied the teaching which he is now in a position to verify. He has thus at least one point of connection with the known, and so he avoids something of the discomfort felt by those who find themselves far away from all their familiar landmarks, adrift on a shoreless sea out of which who knows what unspeakable and formless horror may at any moment rise ?

Nor is this sense of security and confidence the only advantage gained by the possession of definite knowledge. The man who is sure of his own ground is able to extend a helping hand to others also, and can readily make himself a centre of peace and happiness for hundreds of those who have recently crossed the boundary and entered the unseen world. In the very act of doing all this he of course generates a vast amount of additional good karma for himself, and his own evolution is thus greatly quickened.

### *Mourning and Grief.*

When these preliminary misconceptions about death are removed, and the real facts with regard to it are made known, it is at once seen that the whole system of mourning with which it is surrounded is a mistake of the most flagrant kind. Not only are all the grotesque and ghastly paraphernalia of fashionable woe the concomitants of an absurd anachronism, an ignoble survival of mediæval superstition, but the exaggerated grief which they are so childishly supposed to typify is itself a fatal error, born of grossest ignorance and unbelief. A Christian who really believed that his beloved friend had entered into

the joy of the direct presence of his Lord would be as little likely to celebrate such an event by wearing black clothes and crape or using black-edged notepaper as would the true Theosophist who knew that his dear one had passed to a higher and happier existence on the astral plane, and was well on his way towards the still more glorious life of the heaven-world.

Nor is this all. It is not only that the uncontrolled grief for the death of a friend is based upon a complete misapprehension, and so represents a vast accumulation of absolutely unnecessary suffering. The case is far more serious even than that, for these wild outbursts of sorrow, this long-continued and unappeasable lamentation always produce a most painful effect upon the very departed friend for whom we feel so deep an affection. When he is sinking peacefully and naturally into the unconsciousness which precedes his awakening amid the glories of the heaven-world, he is too often aroused from his dreamy happiness into a vivid remembrance of the earth-life which he has lately left by the passionate sorrow and desires of his friends on earth, which awaken corresponding vibrations in his own desire-body, and so cause him acute discomfort and prolonged depression, and very seriously delay his onward progress. This lack of control on the part of surviving friends is one of the greatest obstacles in the way of those who try to help the dead, and often renders futile long hours of patient endeavour on their part. Even the dead themselves have sometimes recognized the hindrance imposed upon them by the unrestrained grief of ignorant though well-meaning relations, as may be seen by some of the stories current among the peasantry of Brittany.

It must not for a moment be inferred from this that the occultist fails in sympathy towards those who have



loved and (as they so mistakenly think) lost, or that his doctrine counsels forgetfulness of those who have passed on before us. But it does suggest that the remembrance should take a form which will be helpful and not harmful—that for selfish and unavailing regret should be substituted earnest and loving good wishes, such as we have already recommended. It does ask the survivor to raise his thought to a higher level—to forget himself and the delusion of his apparent loss, in order to add yet something more to the certainty of great and glorious gain for his friend.

Another very widely-spread idea in connection with death is that it is in itself necessarily painful, and much has been done to foster this by gruesome stories about death-struggles and death-rattles. It seems fairly certain that this tradition also may be included among our misconceptions, for these unpleasant symptoms are usually only final spasmodic movements of the physical body after the conscious ego has already left it. In almost every case the actual passing-away appears to be perfectly painless, even where there has been long and terrible suffering in the illness which it terminates. The peaceful look which so often comes over the face after death is strong evidence in favour of this suggestion, which is also borne out by the direct testimony of most of those to whom the question has been put immediately after death, while its circumstances were still fresh in their memories.

### *The Greater Reality.*

Even when we have fully realized how small a part of each of our life-cycles is spent upon this physical plane, we are not yet in a position fairly to estimate its true proportion to the whole, unless we also understand and bear thoroughly in mind the far greater reality of the life

in those higher worlds. This is a point which it is impossible to emphasize too strongly, for the vast majority of people are as yet so entirely under the dominion of their physical senses that to them the unreal seems the only reality, while on the other hand the nearer anything approaches to true reality the more absolutely unreal and incomprehensible it appears to them.

The astral plane has been called the world of illusion, for reasons which are sufficiently comprehensible; yet it is at least one step higher than the physical, and therefore one stage nearer to reality. There may be much in that world which is illusory, but at least the further descent into this denser veil of gross physical matter makes the delusion greater, and not less. Far indeed is the astral sight from the clear all-embracing vision of the soul of man on its own plane, but at least it is keener and more reliable than any physical sense. And as is the astral to the physical, so is the mental to the astral, except that the proportion is raised to a higher power; so that not only is the time spent upon these planes far longer than the physical life, but every moment of it may if properly used be enormously more fruitful than the same amount of time here could possibly be.

### *Why We Need Physical Life.*

So emphatically and so thoroughly is this the case that the physical life would really seem an almost unimportant and negligible quantity, but for the fact that at our present stage of evolution there is much experience that we can attain only through the slower vibrations of this coarser and heavier matter, and so the earth-life is necessary for us.

This is a point upon which, perhaps, a word or two ought here to be said, lest in endeavouring to remove mis-

conceptions we should ourselves be misconceived. Some people have been disposed to think that since death is but the entrance into a better life, and seems altogether so beautiful and desirable a thing, there is, therefore, no need for us ever to make any effort to avoid it, or to take any trouble to preserve mere physical life. Indeed, a man might well suppose that the sooner he died the better; such knowledge would seem almost to place a premium on suicide! If we were thinking solely of ourselves and of our pleasure, then emphatically that would be so. But if we think of our duty towards the Logos, and towards our fellow-men, then we shall at once see that this consideration is negatived.

While it is perfectly true that in the case of everyone who has lived at all a good or useful life here, the astral existence will be a much happier and fuller one than this, it must be remembered that we are here for a purpose—a purpose which can only be attained upon this physical plane. The instinct of self-preservation is a true and worthy one, divinely implanted in our breasts, and it is our duty to make the most of this earthly life which is ours, and to retain it as long as circumstances permit. There are lessons to be learnt on this plane which cannot be learnt anywhere else, and the sooner we learn them the sooner we shall be free for ever from the need of return to this lower and more limited life. At present the physical plane is the principal theatre of our evolution, and a great deal of very necessary progress can be made only under its somewhat gross and undesirable conditions. The appointed method for the evolution of our latent qualities is by learning to vibrate in response to impacts from without. But at the level of the soul himself the vibrations are far too fine and rapid to awaken this response at present; he must begin with those which

are coarser and stronger, and having awakened his dormant sensibilities by their means, he will gradually grow more and more sensitive until he is capable of perfect response at all levels to all possible rates of vibration—or, in other words, he has become perfect in sympathy and compassion. But to attain this glorious result he must begin on the physical plane. Each incarnation costs the ego no inconsiderable trouble in its preparation, and also in the wearisome period of early childhood during which he is gradually and with much effort gaining some control over his new vehicles. When, therefore, he has achieved his task and painfully grown for himself a series of comparatively suitable bodies, it is obviously alike his duty and his interest to make the most of them and to preserve them as carefully as possible. Assuredly he ought by no means to yield them up until the Great Law compels him to do so, except at the bidding of some higher and overmastering duty from outside, such as that of the soldier to his country.

So none must dare to die until his times comes, though when it does come he may well rejoice, for indeed he is about to pass from labour to refreshment—from darkness into light, from limitation into freedom; and he may well be filled with exultation at the prospect.

Exultation is the going of an inland soul to sea,  
Past the houses, past the headlands, into deep eternity.

Yet all this which we have heard is insignificant beside the glory of the life which follows it—the life of the Heaven-World. This is the purgatory; that is the endless bliss of which monks have dreamed and poets sung—not a dream after all, but a living and glorious reality. The astral life is happy for some, unhappy for others, according to the preparation they have made for it; but what

follows it is perfect happiness for all, and exactly suited to the needs of each. But we shall describe this in a later chapter.

In most of us, then, the consciousness is not yet sufficiently developed to function untrammelled through the higher vehicles, so that there are certain directions in which it can be reached only through the physical senses, though when it has been so reached and fully awakened down here it can continue to work along those lines in other and higher worlds. Thus, unreal though it be, this physical life is in some sense a seedtime, for in it we may set in motion forces whose harvest will be reaped under the far more favourable and fruitful conditions of higher spheres.

But this truth in no way modifies the great fact above stated of the superior *reality* of those higher spheres, and it must not be allowed to dim our appreciation of the eternal verity that death is for us in very truth the gateway of a grander life—that all that we know now of glory and of beauty is simply as nothing to the glory and beauty of the worlds into which it leads us. And this because as we pass through that gate of death, one at least (and that the heaviest and the darkest) of many veils falls for us from before the face of Him who is Himself Glory and Beauty, the all-pervading Lord of life and death alike.

If we can but grasp this truth of the greater reality of the higher worlds we shall have rid ourselves for ever of that fatal sense of vagueness and dimness which for so many people surrounds all that is not physical. There has been no greater enemy to a true appreciation of the meaning and the use of life, no more powerful weapon in the hands of the evil-minded, than the helpless vagueness about all higher life which has so long characterized the thought of the majority of the men of these Western

races. For the occult student there should be here no difficulty whatever, and among the ranks of our members there should be none in whom this realization is still lacking.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FACTS AS THEY ARE.

I have already referred to the latent faculties by means of which the unseen world can be directly cognized, and the whole life beyond the grave seen as clearly and as fully in detail as we now see the physical life around us. A certain number of our Theosophical students have already unfolded these inner senses, and so are in a position to give very definite information upon this most interesting subject. I am quite aware that this is a considerable claim to make—a claim which would not be made by any of the modern expounders of Western Orthodoxy. Any minister of any church will have his version of the states after death to put before us; and in support of it he will explain that the Church teaches this or that, or that the bible tells us so and so. But he will never say to us, “I who speak to you have been into this heaven or this hell which I describe; I myself have seen these things and therefore know them to be true.” But that is precisely what the Theosophical investigators are able to say, for they do know that of which they speak, and they are dealing with a definite series of facts which they have personally investigated, and therefore they speak with the authority and certainty which only direct knowledge gives. Yet in thus offering what they know, they will say always to their hearers, “Unless this commends itself to you as utterly reasonable, do not rest contented with our assertion; look into these things for yourself as fully as you can, along any or all of the many lines which are open to you, and then you will be in a position to speak to others

as authoritatively as we do." But what are the facts which are disclosed to us by these investigations?

The state of affairs found as actually existing is much more rational than most of the current theories. It is not found that any sudden change takes place in the man at death, or that he is spirited away to some heaven beyond the stars. On the contrary man remains after death exactly what he was before it—the same in intellect, the same in his qualities and powers; and the conditions into which the man passes are precisely those that he has made for himself. The thoughts and desires which he has encouraged within himself during earth-life take form as definite living entities hovering around him and reacting upon him until the energy which he poured into them is exhausted. When such thoughts and desires have been powerful and persistently evil, the companions so created may indeed be terrible; but happily such cases form a very small minority among the dwellers in the astral world. The worst that the ordinary man of the world usually provides for himself after death is a useless and unutterably wearisome existence, void of all rational interests—the natural sequence of a life wasted in self-indulgence, triviality and gossip here on earth.

There is no reward or punishment from outside, but only the actual result of what the man himself has done and said and thought while here on earth. In fact, the man makes his bed during earth-life, and afterwards he has to lie on it.

Yet this new life must by no means be thought of as merely a life of results. It may be little more than that for some men, but that is entirely their own fault. The astral plane is one stage higher than the physical, and therefore its possibilities, both of enjoyment and of progress, are in every way very much greater than those of



the lower level. But the possibilities are themselves of a higher character, and it requires a certain amount of intelligence and sense to take advantage of them. If a man is so undeveloped intellectually that during the physical stage of his life he has not been able to look beyond that stage, but has devoted the whole of his thought and his energy solely to material things, he is little likely to be able to adapt himself to more advanced conditions. Since he neglected or was too blind to see the smaller opportunities of the physical, it is scarcely probable that his half-atrophied mind will be strong enough to grasp the wider possibilities of this grander life.

But if during earth-life he has had any intelligent interest, if he has had soul enough to look beyond gross matter, he will now find opening before him new lines of investigation and study of the most thrilling interest. If in this earlier stage he has learnt to delight in unselfish actions and to work for the good of others, the astral life will be for him one of the most vivid joy and the most rapid progress. The man who is intelligent and helpful, who understands the conditions of this non-physical existence and takes the trouble to adapt himself to them and make the most of them, finds opening before him a splendid vista of opportunities both for acquiring fresh knowledge and for doing useful work.

He discovers that life away from this dense body has a vividness and brilliancy to which all earthly enjoyment is as moonlight unto sunlight, and that through his clear knowledge and calm confidence the power of the endless life shines out upon all those around him. As has been said above, he may become a centre of peace and joy unspeakable to hundreds of his fellow men, and may do more good in a few years of that astral existence than ever he could have done in the longest physical life.

*Not a New Life.*

This is the first and most prominent fact—that we have not here a strange new life, but a continuation of the present one. We are not separated from the dead, for they are here about us all the time. The only separation is the limitation of our consciousness, so that we have lost, not our loved ones, but the power to see them. It is quite possible for us so to raise our consciousness that we can see them and talk with them as before, and all of us constantly do that, though we only rarely remember it fully. A man may learn to focus his consciousness in his astral body while his physical body is still awake, but that needs special development, and in the case of the average man would take much time. But during the sleep of his physical body every man uses his astral vehicle to a greater or less extent, and in that way we are daily with our departed friends. Sometimes we have a partial remembrance of meeting them, and then we say we have dreamt of them; more frequently we have no recollection of such encounters and remain ignorant that they have taken place. Yet it is a definite fact that the ties of affection are still as strong as ever, and so the moment the man is freed from the chains of his physical encasement he naturally seeks the company of those whom he loves. So that in truth the only change is that he spends the night with them instead of the day, and he is conscious of them astrally instead of physically.

Monsieur L. Mariller, in his introduction to Le Braz's *La Légende de la Mort en Basse Brétagne*, gives a very interesting account of the feelings and beliefs of the peasantry in Brittany with regard to death and the after-states. He says: "For the Bretons the living and the dead are equally the inhabitants of this world, and they

live in perpetual intercourse with one another. 'L'Anaon' (as they name the vast crowd and concourse of the dead) may be feared, as the storm and the tempest are feared, but no more surprise is felt that the thorn-bushes and the rushes that border the roadsides should be shaken by the passing of disembodied spirits, than that the birds should warble blithely in those bushes. For the Breton the world of wonder is interwoven with the world visible, as the honeysuckle is intertwined about the hedge. He has a tender respect for the dead. For 'L'Anaon' his feelings are deep and strong, half terror, half tender compassion.

"The dead mingle with the living in close companionship; they are associated with their daily and hourly existence. They wander at night along the highways and the lonely lanes, they haunt the fields and the plains, as thick as the blades of grass in the meadow, and as the sands on the seashore. They return to the houses in which they dwelt in their mortal bodies, bringing tidings from the other side; the messengers of penance or of blessing, they glide about the silent homesteads at the midnight hour, and they may be dimly perceived from out screened bedsteads, crouching over the dying embers on the hearth. They come as the protecting spirits of the household to watch over those they have left behind them exposed to the dangers and the snares of life. Mothers come to caress their children in their sleep, tending them, rocking them and wiping away their tears. In some cases, however, it is the memory of the possessions they have left behind, of their well-fenced farms, of their red cattle with shining hides, of their cornfields waving like a sea of golden sunshine, that brings the dead out of their graves, and an old labourer will return to his plough and guide it with a firm hand through the fertile furrows, the

yearning after old associations drawing him from out the silent realm of disembodied souls.

"All the dead, be it observed, are not regarded as kindly. Some, on the contrary, can be cruel to those who are still amongst the living, and it is not well to approach them too closely. The sounds and movements of the material world drown for most people the whispering voices of the dead. According to Breton belief, were we less taken up with our business and our pleasure, we should know almost all that goes on beyond the grave."

The bringing through of the memory from the astral plane to the physical is another and quite separate consideration, which in no way affects our consciousness on that other plane, nor our ability to function upon it with perfect ease and freedom. Whether we recollect them or not, the dead are still living their life close to us, and the only difference is that they have taken off this robe of flesh which we call the body. That makes no change in them, any more than it makes a change in our personality when we remove our overcoats. We are somewhat freer, indeed, because we have less weight to carry, and precisely the same is the case with them. The man's passions, affections, emotions and intellect are not in the least affected when he dies, for none of these belong to the physical body which he has laid aside. He has dropped this vesture and is living in another, but he is still able to think and to feel just as before.

### *The Reality of the Unseen.*

I know how difficult it is for the average mind to grasp the reality of that which we cannot see with our physical eyes. It is very hard for us to realize how very partial our sight is—to understand that we are living in a vast world of which we see only a tiny part. Yet science

tells us with no uncertain voice that this is so, for it describes to us whole worlds of minute life of whose very existence we should be entirely ignorant as far as our senses are concerned. Nor are the creatures of those worlds unimportant because minute, for upon a knowledge of the condition and habits of some of those microbes depends our ability to preserve health and in many cases life itself. But our senses are limited in another direction. We cannot see the very air that surrounds us; our senses would give us no indication of its existence, except that when it is in motion we are aware of it by the sense of touch. Yet in it there is a force that can wreck our mightiest vessels and throw down our strongest buildings. Clearly all about us there are mighty forces which yet elude our poor and partial senses; so obviously we must beware of falling into the fatally common error of supposing that what we see is all there is to see.

As Sir Oliver Lodge remarked in a recent address at Birmingham on "Our Place in the Universe":

"If the sky had always been cloudy we should have no definite knowledge of the sun; so there may be many other existences in the universe which we could see if our senses were keener and if nothing obscured our vision. What we see and know is in all probability a minute fraction of what there is to know and see."

We are, as it were, shut up in a tower and our senses are tiny windows opening out in certain directions. In many other directions we are entirely shut in, but clairvoyance or astral sight opens for us one or two additional windows, and so enlarges our prospect, and spreads before us a new and wider world, which is yet part of the old one, though before we did not know it.

*What He Sees.*

Looking out into this new world, what should we first see ? Supposing that one of us transferred his consciousness to the astral plane, what changes would be the first to strike him ? To the first glance there would probably be very little difference, and he would suppose himself to be looking upon the same world as before. Let me explain why this is so—partially at least, for to explain fully would need a whole essay upon astral physics. Just as we have different conditions of matter here, the solid, the liquid, the gaseous, so are there different conditions or degrees of density of astral matter, and each degree is attracted by and corresponds to that which is similar to it on the physical plane. So that our friend would still see the walls and the furniture to which he was accustomed, for though the physical matter of which they are composed would no longer be visible to him, the densest type of astral matter would still outline them for him as clearly as ever. True, if he examined the object closely he would perceive that all the particles were visibly in rapid motion, instead of only invisibly, as is the case on this plane ; but very few men do observe closely, and so a man who dies often does not know at first that any change has come over him.

He looks about him, and sees the same rooms with which he is familiar, peopled still by those whom he has known and loved—for they also have astral bodies, which are within the range of his new vision. Only by degrees does he realize that in some ways there is a difference. For example, he soon finds that for him all pain and fatigue have passed away. If you can at all realize what that means, you will begin to have some idea of what the higher life truly is. Think of it, you who have scarcely ever

a comfortable moment, you who in the stress of your busy life can hardly remember when you last felt free from fatigue; what would it be to you never again to know the meaning of the words weariness and pain? We have so mismanaged our teaching in these Western countries on the subject of immortality that usually a dead man finds it difficult to believe that he is dead, simply because he still sees and hears, thinks and feels. "I am not dead," he will often say, "I am alive as much as ever, and better than I ever was before." Of course he is; but that is exactly what he ought to have expected, if he had been properly taught.

Realization may perhaps come to him in this way. He sees his friends about him, but he soon discovers that he cannot always communicate with them. Sometimes he speaks to them, and they do not seem to hear; he tries to touch them, and finds that he can make no impression upon them. Even then, for some time he persuades himself that he is dreaming, and will presently awake, for at other times (when they are what we call asleep) his friends are perfectly conscious of him, and talk with him as of old. But gradually he discovers the fact that he is after all dead; and then he usually begins to become uneasy. Why? Again because of the defective teaching which he has received. He does not understand where he is, or what has happened, since his situation is not what he expected from the orthodox standpoint. As an English general once said on this occasion, "But if I am dead, where am I? If this is heaven, I don't think much of it; and if it is hell, it is better than I expected!"

A great deal of totally unnecessary uneasiness and even acute suffering has been caused in this way, and the fault is with those who still continue to teach the world silly fables about non-existent bugbears instead of using

reason and common sense. The baseless and blasphemous hell-fire theory has done more harm than even its promoters know, for it has worked evil beyond the grave as well as on this side. But presently the man will meet with some other dead person who has been more sensibly instructed, and will learn from him that there is no cause for fear, and that there is a rational life to be lived in this new world, just as there was in the old one.

He will find by degrees that there is very much that is new, as well as much that is a counterpart of that which he already knows; for in this astral world thoughts and desires express themselves in visible forms, though these are composed mostly of the finer matter of the plane. As his astral life proceeds, these become more and more prominent, for we must remember that he is all the while steadily withdrawing further and further into himself. The entire period of an incarnation is in reality occupied by the ego in first putting himself forth into matter, and then in drawing back again with the results of his effort.

As we have said, even during the physical life his thoughts should gradually turn upwards, he should care less and less for merely physical matters, until the time comes when he drops the dense body altogether. Then his life on the astral plane commences, but during the whole of it the process of withdrawal continues. The result of this is that as time passes he pays less and less attention to the lower matter, of which counterparts of physical objects are composed, and is more and more occupied with that higher matter of which thought-forms are built—so far, that is, as thought-forms appear on the astral plane at all. So his life becomes more and more a life in a world of thought, and the counterpart of the world which he has left fades from his view—not that he has changed his location in space, but that his interest is shifting its



centre. His desires still persist, and the forms surrounding him will be very largely the expression of these desires, and whether his life is one of happiness or discomfort will depend chiefly upon the nature of these.

A study of this astral life shows us very clearly the reason for many ethical precepts. Most men recognize that sins which injure others are definitely and obviously wrong; but they sometimes wonder why it should be said to be wrong for them to feel jealousy, or hatred or ambition, so long as they do not allow themselves to manifest these feelings outwardly in deed or in speech. A glimpse at this after-world shows us exactly how such feelings injure the man who harbours them, and how they cause him suffering of the most acute character after his death. We shall understand this better if we examine a few typical cases of astral life, and see what are their principal characteristics.

## CHAPTER VI.

### SOME EXAMPLES OF ASTRAL LIFE.

Let us think first of the ordinary colourless man, who is neither specially good nor specially bad, nor indeed specially anything in particular. The man is in no way changed, so colourlessness will remain his principal characteristic (if we can call it one) after his death. He will have no special suffering and no special joy, and may very probably find astral life rather dull, because he has not during his time on earth developed any rational interests. If he has had no ideas beyond gossip or what is called sport, if he has thought of nothing beyond his business or his dress, he is likely to find time hang heavy on his hands when all such things are no longer possible.

It may perhaps help the reader to understand this if I quote a description of the attitude of a person of this type, taken from a little-known book, written many years ago by a Christian who seems never to have heard of Theosophy, and scarcely even of spiritualism, yet possessed while still in physical life the power of seeing and conversing with those who have left their bodies:

"In passing a certain house during the past year I have met almost daily its former owner. He had been a physician in good practice and very popular socially—a welcome guest in many homes. . . . He told me he was lonely and miserable; he had companionship, but did not care for it; he liked better to roam about his old home and live in his old associations, though it pained him that his wife thought of him as happy in a far-off heaven, and that he could not make her feel his pres-

ence. I urged him to leave the earth atmosphere and rise into a higher life, where the stimulus of work is even more urgent than here, but he replied that he could not see what there was for a doctor to do where there were no frail bodies to wear out.

"He was very much disappointed to find a continued existence so unlike his anticipations, but supposed he must wait for the judgment day to know whether he was among the lost or the saved. He had always attended church when he could, both from habit and because it was the proper thing to do, but had never thought seriously about religious matters, preferring society and the good things of earth, of which he had an abundance. Nevertheless he had died confessing his faith in the redeemer. Now things seemed to be turned upside down; those he had thought unbelievers are so radiant with spiritual light that he cannot endure their presence, while many good church members are quite the opposite. . . .

"I tried to make him understand how all days are judgment days, that by his own admission he had lived for the physical life alone, and the dwarfing of his spiritual nature was his present judgment; that we are saved by holy lives, not by a vicarious atonement; that Christ and his true disciples (the Christlike) are living and working to increase the kingdom of righteousness, and that though he could no longer heal the sick bodies, he could work to save souls. But this idea offended him—he was not intended to be a minister; and I could not make him feel that, in the sense of helping, we are all meant to be ministers." (*Light on the Hidden Way*, Boston, Ticknor & Co., 1886, p. 71.)

This little account of a very ordinary phenomenon of astral life is both characteristic and interesting. It gives

us evidence not only of the dullness and discomfort of the life which has no higher interests, but also of the evil effect produced by false and imperfect religious teaching. The writer of the book goes on to relate how, after many conversations and explanations, this unfortunate doctor was at last brought through much suffering to a wiser and better frame of mind, and was enabled to rise to a higher level of the plane. It is by no means uncommon for a man who, without ever thinking of it, has been living a careless, selfish and worldly life to come gradually to the realization of that fact when he is able to look back upon it with the clearer vision of the astral plane. He sees himself for the first time as he really is, and often his remorse is terrible and enduring.

Yet in this clearer sight there lies for him the possibility of great improvement; in his retrospection he sees the opportunities which he has missed, the qualities in which he has been defective and the good that he might have done, but did not; and often he thinks of himself as outcast and condemned. But fortunately for him there are helpers ever working upon the astral plane, so that there will presently be someone to explain to him that it is never too late to mend, that by beginning now to develop higher qualities within himself he will ensure their possession in his next earth life. Sometimes, however, such a man will settle down into a condition of apathetic despair, and surround himself with a heavy black cloud of depression which it is exceedingly difficult to dissipate. Having had no thought about or experiences of spiritual power in his earth-life, he has now no comprehension of its splendid possibilities, and so he sinks into a state of stolid hopelessness which often resists for a long time the well-meant effort of his friends and helpers. This story of the doctor is a very good example of the result of an

ordinary and rather selfish life; we find many thousands of men on the astral plane in such a plight as this, though happily there are also thousands who are better circumstanced, just because they have been less selfish.

*Cases Below the Ordinary.*

It will be well for us to consider now various cases which differ from the ordinary in both directions, in order that we may obtain a full grasp of the possibilities of this after-life, and of the results produced on it by the different characteristics acquired in the physical existence. I have already referred in a previous chapter to the sad predicament in which the drunkard finds himself after leaving earth-life; and it must be remembered that it is simply an example of the result of any strong desires of a lower material type, such as can be satisfied only on the physical plane. Such overmastering cravings remain undiminished after death, or rather, they are stronger than ever, since their vibrations have no longer the heavy physical particles to set in motion. The case of the sensualist is perhaps even worse than that of the drunkard. All this was perfectly well known in the ancient world, even as late as classical times. We see it clearly imaged for us in the myth of Tantalus, who suffered always from a raging thirst, yet was doomed forever to see the water recede just as it was about to touch his lips.

Sometimes these people suffer woefully from the pangs of remorse, but the situation is even more horrible when they remain unrepentant and make frantic endeavours to come into touch to some extent with their old debaucheries even in their new life. We have seen previously that men of similar tastes and desires are drawn together in that life, just as they are in this; and so it will happen that men of flagitious and dissolute inclinations herd

together even after death, haunting the scenes which they befouled with their depravity, and rendering their vitiated atmosphere still more pestilent by the poisonous exhalations of their licentious thoughts and desires. Being in the lowest and most degraded condition of astral life, they seem often to be still sufficiently near to the physical to be sensitive to certain odours; and though the titillation produced by those is only sufficient still further to excite their mad desires and to tantalize the poor creatures to the verge of frenzy, they yet seem unable to tear themselves away from the dens of profligacy to whose malignant spell they had so recklessly yielded while in the denser body.

Under these circumstances there sometimes opens before them the possibility of a vicarious gratification of their lusts which is more terrible than the acutest of their sufferings, in that it constitutes a new and more heinous crime, which will exact an awful expiation later. A man who weakens his will as well as his body brings himself presently into a position in which the hold of the ego upon its vehicles is exceedingly feeble. He is therefore liable to be seized upon while indulging his uncontrolled passions, impelled to still further excesses by the intervention of the vicious dead, and may finally be absolutely obsessed by one of them, who thus brings himself once more into relations with a physical body and experiences vicariously his old abominable gratifications. Such obsession is of course utterly unnatural and in the highest degree harmful to both parties; and to one who knows anything of its results the bare possibility of it would be the most powerful deterrent from a dissolute life.

Sometimes, though not very frequently, it is possible to rescue one of these unfortunates from the bad company which has so strong an attraction for him; and in

this case again his remorse is terrible to see. On the astral plane, as on the physical, men sometimes fall into evil surroundings from a feeling of despair—because, through the cruelly defective and indeed blasphemous teaching of modern theology, they believe themselves to have committed unpardonable sins; and thus it sometimes happens that by patient explanation they may be extracted from the slough of despondency, and so brought to regard with horror the associations into which they had lapsed.

*Avarice and Jealousy.*

Many another sin produces its result in a manner just as gruesome as drunkenness or sensuality, though each is peculiar to itself. We may imagine how the miser suffers when he can no longer hoard his gold or when he perhaps knows that it is being spent by alien hands. We may see how the jealous man will continue to suffer from his jealousy, knowing that he has no power to interfere upon the physical plane, yet feeling more strongly than ever.

Such men often cling desperately to physical life because of the baneful fascination exercised over them by their special vice. A man who during earth-life has been so silly as to feel jealous of the affection showered upon another, often learns no wisdom from his passage through the gates of death. Though he has no longer any power to interfere, though he cannot possibly be himself the recipient of the physical-plane affection, he still continues insanely to grudge it to the other man, and insists on torturing himself by remaining to witness what above all things he loathes to see. Jealousy is of course at all times utterly selfish and irrational, but after death its surgings often become yet wilder, and its unfortunate victim seems

further removed than ever from the faintest gleam of common-sense.

Men who have hoarded money seem generally to be more or less troubled about it, though their anxiety takes various forms. Some feel strongly the sense of property in it, though they can no longer use it in any way, and they are in terror lest it should be discovered and squandered, and they often try to prevent this by haunting the spot where it is concealed, in order to terrify and drive away any who may come dangerously near their hiding-place. Others, on the contrary, seeing their friends or children in need of the hidden store, are just as anxious that it should be found and utilized.

### *Revenge.*

Several remarkable instances of the display after death of a spirit of revenge for real or fancied wrongs have come under my notice within the last twenty years. One of the most curious is thus described in *The Theosophical Review*, vol. xxii, p. 181.

"A friend of mine had a dagger which was said to have the gruesome property of inspiring anyone who took hold of it with a longing to kill some woman. My friend was sceptical, but still eyed the dagger a little doubtfully, for when he had himself taken hold of it he felt so 'queer' that he had quickly put it down again. There seemed no doubt that at least two women had, as a matter of fact, been murdered with it. I took the thing away to make some experiments, and sat down quietly by myself, holding the dagger. A curious kind of dragging at me began, as though some one were trying to make me move away. I declined to stir, and looked to see what it was. I saw a wild looking man, a Pathan, I think, who seemed very angry at my not going where he pushed me,



and he was trying to get into me, as it were, an attempt that I naturally resisted. I asked what he was doing, but he did not understand. So I looked from higher up and saw that his wife had left him for another man, and that he had found them together and had stabbed them with the man's own dagger, the very one I was then holding. He had then sworn revenge against the whole sex, and had killed his wife's sister and another woman before he was himself stabbed. He had then attached himself to the dagger, and had obsessed its various owners, pushing them to murder women, and to his savage delight had met with much success. Great was his wrath at my unexpected resistance. As I could not make him understand me, I handed him over to an Indian friend, who gradually led him to a better view of life, and he agreed that his dagger should be broken up and buried. I accordingly broke it up and buried it. . . .

"I should have broken it up all the same, whether the Pathan had permitted it or not. Still it was better for him that he should agree to it."

Another somewhat similar case in more civilized life was that of a dissipated old man who had squandered a fortune in gambling and wild living, and then, when after his repeated and disreputable excesses he found his friends beginning to avoid him, committed suicide, declaring that the world had forced him to this by its coldness and ingratitude, and that he would revenge himself upon it by destroying as many other men as he could. In retaliation for these aforesaid wrongs he had haunted for some sixty years the scene of his own death, striving to impel into suicide any whose frame of mind laid them open to his influence, and, whenever he succeeded, overwhelming his victim with tauntings and ridicule. I related in *Lucifer* a few years ago a still

more dramatic case in which an engine-driver returned from the dead in order to kill his successful rival; but the story is too long to quote here. Sooner or later such a man can generally be brought to see the wickedness of his attitude, and then his repentance is often sincere and poignant.

Remember the fate of Sisyphus in Greek myth—how he was condemned forever to roll a heavy rock up to the summit of a mountain, only to see it roll down again the moment that success seemed within his reach. See how exactly this typifies the after-life of the man of worldly ambition. He has all his life been in the habit of forming selfish plans, and therefore he continues to do so in the astral world; he carefully builds up his plan till it is perfect in his mind, and only then remembers that he has lost the physical body which is necessary for its achievement. Down fall his hopes; yet so ingrained is the habit that he continues again and again to roll this same stone up the same mountain of ambition until the vice is worn out. Then at last he realizes that he need not roll his rock, and he lets it rest in peace at the bottom of the hill.

### *Astral Thought-Forms.*

Every thought of the man which is connected with self or tainted by any desire for his own gain instantly draws round itself matter of the astral plane as well as of the mental, and remains hovering round him. If any man yields frequently to thoughts of this type, he makes for himself exceedingly strong thought-forms, which are constantly fed and rendered more and more powerful by each recurrence of the feeling. During physical life these are invisible to him, although their influence is constantly reacting upon him and tending to reproduce in

him the thought which created them; but after death they become visible and haunting forms from which he cannot escape, because their attraction to him is of the very essence of their nature. In many cases it is in this way that men first come to realize how ugly and hateful some of their thoughts may be, and so they learn to exercise more rigid supervision over them.

A man may sometimes find himself surrounded by thoughts which are not his own, for if any one else is directing towards him any strong feeling, whether it be of love or hate, of joy or sorrow, he will certainly find the thought-form which expresses it hovering about him, and will feel within himself the effect of its vibrations. It is in this way that the strong thoughts of love and the friendly wish which should accompany a remembrance of the dead produce so beneficent a result upon them. We may, if we will, surround the friend whom we have "lost" with a rosy cloud of affectionate thought, through which he will see everything *couleur de rose*, so that it may be a veritable shield for him from unpleasant influences; and its own action upon him will also tend to stir up within him sympathetic feelings of affection, and to calm all disturbances. A reference to Plate ix. in *Man Visible and Invisible* will show how the thought-form of affection is shaped within the astral body of the thinker, and in the illustrations to Mrs. Besant's article upon "Thought Forms" in *Lucifer*, September, 1896, the thought-form will be seen rushing on its way towards its object.

Other thought-forms are less pleasant than this; and sometimes it is no small part of the retribution which overtakes the man who during earth-life has treated others harshly to see after death the thought-forms of those whom he has injured, and to feel the vibrations

which radiate from them. On the contrary, one who has been widely loved is very much helped and uplifted by the currents of thought directed to him. A very noticeable example of this was seen in the case of Her Majesty the late Queen Victoria, whose rapid passage into the heaven-world was undoubtedly due to the millions of loving and grateful thought-forms which were sent to her, as well as to her own inherent goodness.

Unfortunately there are sometimes men who deserve the distrust or anger of many, instead of their love. It has sometimes fared hardly after death with those whose financial operations have heartlessly ruined hundreds of people, for the forms which surround them in menacing crowds have often caused them the utmost horror and remorse. The thought-form has no intelligence of its own, and has only a temporary existence, the length of which is determined by the energy put into the thought in the first place. Nevertheless it is impossible for the man towards whom it is directed to escape from it, since the very cause of its existence, the essence of its being, is its attraction towards him. He may, if he knows how to do so, surround himself with a shell which will prevent its vibrations from affecting him; he may (again if he knows how to do it) break up and dissipate that thought-form by an effort of his will; but while it exists it will cling to him with the tenacity of a limpet. Usually thought-forms coming from different persons retain their individuality and have each of them a distinct impress of the mind from which they came; but under certain circumstances it has been found that it is possible for the thought-forms generated by many persons to coalesce into one gigantic phantom, and if this be of an unpleasant nature, the result may be very terrible.

*The Fate of a Coquette.*

One such case which came recently under the notice of our investigators may serve as an example and a warning. It was that of a young woman who had appeared in some capacity at a music-hall, and had presumably been at one time physically attractive. She seems to have been vain and heartless, and to have taken a malicious delight in exhibiting her power over foolish and dissolute young men. She herself boasted of having been the cause of two duels and a suicide, to say nothing of a long list of supposed conquests and broken hearts. Her career, however, came to an abrupt and tragic end, and on the astral plane she found herself confronted by the rage and hatred of all those who felt that they had been deceived and ruined by her. In this case the concentrated anger and detestation of many had collected into one horrible form, which in outward appearance somewhat resembled a huge distorted gorilla. This unpleasant attendant seemed filled with the most malignant ferocity, and caused her the utmost terror; but though she spent her astral life in flying from it, it was quite impossible to escape it. The investigators who encountered this case promptly destroyed this malignant apparition; but the young woman herself was, unfortunately, so worthless a creature that it did not seem possible to do very much to assist her. It will of course be understood that it would be in every way as serious a matter to take a life (or as much of life as can ever be taken) on the astral plane as on the physical, but a thought-form of this nature, however active and violent, is simply a temporary creation of evil passion and not in any sense an evolving entity, so that to dissipate it is

simply like destroying a Leyden jar, and is not in any sense a criminal action.

*The Effect of Crime.*

The effect in the future life of the commission of definite crime upon earth is almost infinitely varied according to the circumstances of the case, though always of a most serious nature. Many examples of the way in which such actions work themselves out will be found in a later chapter. It is found, for instance, that in many cases a murderer will go over and over again in thought the crime which he has committed, and will very often by such ceaseless round of half malevolent, half horror-stricken meditation produce something in the nature of a haunting at the scene of his violent deed.

That the man suffers acutely under such conditions we cannot doubt; but perhaps his position is hardly so painful as that of one who is perpetually haunted. A case of this latter nature came under our notice in the course of our examination into the laws under which reincarnation takes place. We found two friends living together as members of an Arab tribe, and greatly attached to one another until unfortunately both of them became enamoured of the same young lady. One of them, when this was discovered, became filled with rage and insane jealousy against the other, and, fearing that he was unduly favoured by the damsel, plotted to remove him from his path. He did not actually murder him, but betrayed him to certain death at the hands of a hostile tribe by causing false information to be given to him. Very shortly afterwards the young woman, who had not particularly cared for either of them, gave her hand to some third person, and the murderer, horror-stricken when he

discovered how little his crime had availed him, committed suicide.

Thus both of the friends were thrown out almost simultaneously in the full flush of their young life upon the lower levels of the astral plane, with every prospect of an unusually long sojourn there. Yet their condition was very different. The young man who had been practically murdered furnished an example of the case to which we have referred in an earlier chapter, for although the arrangement of the matter of his astral body confined him to the lowest level of the plane, he was yet entirely unconscious of his surroundings, by reason of the fact that during life he had not been in the habit of employing this lowest class of matter for the expression of his feelings and emotions. The murderer, on the contrary, had been of coarser type, and in him this lowest class of matter had been very fully vivified, so that he was fully conscious of the very unpleasant conditions which are found to prevail there.

The result of this combination of circumstances brought down upon him a penalty for his crime which, although when described it seems to amount to nothing, was one of the most gruesome things to see which I have ever encountered in a long and varied experience; and what made it somehow all the more horrible was that it was so entirely the exact result of the actions and conditions of the persons concerned, so that one who understood the astral plane might have accurately predicted the course of events. The murdered man had died without knowledge of his friend's perfidy, and so was still full of affection for him, and though he was unconscious as yet in his new life, the force of this love constantly operated to bring him into the presence of his murderer.

The latter, filled with unspeakable terror and dismay, fled horror-stricken from the presence of his victim, and rushed to hide himself amidst all the most loathsome scenes, places and people which he could find, in the hope of thus escaping discovery. But just when he thought himself at last to be safely concealed, the unconscious form of the murdered man would come drifting up behind him, unaware alike of the foul conditions surrounding him and of the unspeakable horror which his presence inspired in the mind of the former friend towards whom the tie of affection unceasingly drew him. The very fact of the perfect unconsciousness and good feeling of this drifting apparition seemed somehow to add to the dread which its presence inspired; and there seemed some strange grim pleasantry in the fact that a man actuated only by the sweetest feelings and the kindest intentions was yet taking, without knowing it, the most appalling revenge for a murder of the very commission of which he was entirely unconscious. In the nature of things this flight and pursuit must continue for years, which no doubt would seem eternities of unavailing repentance to the criminal, until at last by slow degrees the outer shell would wear away and there would come a time of mutual explanation.

*The Intelligent Man.*

We have considered the case of the ordinary colourless man, and also that of some of those who are distinctly below the ordinary level—who differ from it by the possession of specially gross and selfish desires or by reason of their criminality.

Now let us examine the case of the man who differs from the ordinary in the other direction—who has some interest of a rational nature. In order to understand



how the after-life appears to him, we must bear in mind that the majority of men spend the greater part of their waking life and most of their strength in work that they do not really like, that they would not do at all if it were not necessary in order to earn their living, or to support those who are dependent upon them. Realize the condition of the man when all necessity for this grinding toil is over, when it is no longer needful to earn a living, since the astral body requires no food nor clothing nor lodging. Then for the first time since earliest childhood that man is free to do precisely what he likes, and can devote his whole time to whatever may be his chosen occupation—so long, that is, as it is of such a nature as to be capable of realization without physical matter.

Suppose that a man's greatest delight is in music; upon the astral plane he has the opportunity of listening to all the grandest music that earth can produce, and is even able under these new conditions to hear far more in it than before, since here other and fuller harmonies than our dull ears can grasp are now within his reach. The man whose delight is in art, who loves beauty in form and in colour, has all the loveliness of this higher world before him from which to choose. If his delight is in beauty in Nature, he has unequalled possibilities for indulging it; for he can readily and rapidly move from place to place, and enjoy in quick succession wonders of Nature which the physical man would need years to visit. If his fancy turns towards science or history, the libraries and the laboratories of the world are at his disposal, and his comprehension of processes in chemistry or biology will be far fuller than ever before, for now he can see the inner as well as the outer workings, and many of the causes as well as the effects. And in

all these cases there is the wonderful additional delight that no fatigue is possible. Here we know how constantly, when we are making some progress in our studies or our experiments, we are unable to carry them on because our brain will not bear more than a certain amount of strain; outside of the physical no fatigue seems to exist, for it is in reality the brain and not the mind that tires.

Many a scientific man has been seen in the astral world pursuing his studies and researches with even greater avidity than upon the physical plane, because of the wider field which lies before him here, and the additional faculties of investigation which he now possesses. I well remember how a great mathematician, recently deceased, came to one of our clairvoyant members, full of delight over some additional discoveries which he had made (since his death) in the higher intricacies of his science, and anxious immediately to publish them to the world; and I remember also how disgusted he was with that member because he was entirely unable in his physical brain to grasp or to express these wonderful new discoveries, which of course had been rendered possible only by the realization of the fourth-dimensionary space of the astral plane, which I shall endeavour to explain in a subsequent chapter.

#### *The Unselfish Worker.*

All this time I have been speaking of mere selfish gratification, even though it be of the rational and intellectual kind. But there are those among us who would not be satisfied without something higher than this—whose greatest joy in any life would consist in serving their fellow-men. What has the astral life in store for them? They will pursue their philanthropy

more vigorously than ever, and under better conditions than on this lower plane. There are thousands whom they can help, and with far greater certainty of really being able to do good than we usually attain in this life. Some devote themselves thus to the general good; some are especially occupied with cases among their own family or friends, either living or dead. It is a strange inversion of the facts, this employment of those words living and dead; for surely we are the dead, we who are buried in these gross, cramping physical bodies, and they are truly the living who are so much freer and more capable because less hampered. Often the mother who has passed into that higher life will still watch over her child, and be to him a veritable guardian angel; often the "dead" husband still remains within reach and in touch for his sorrowing wife, thankful if even now and then he is able to make her feel that he lives in strength and love beside her as of yore.

Just such a case as the last mentioned came under my notice some years ago. The wife in this case was sufficiently psychic to feel her husband's presence, and to receive communications from him through her own hand by means of automatic writing. This continued for some years, but when she came in contact with Theosophy, and read what is written in some of our books as to the inadvisability of delaying a soul in the process of withdrawal into itself after death, she felt somewhat uneasy, and asked her husband whether she was in any way harming him by these communications. He replied in the negative, and, as she was not even then entirely satisfied, advised her to speak to me upon the subject.

I had some conversation with him, and found him most intelligent and unselfish in his view of the matter.

He was quite aware that he risked a certain amount of delay in his own evolution by holding himself so long in connection with the lower astral matter in order to be able to keep in touch with his wife; but he said that he felt that his presence was a comfort to her, and that as long as that was so he was delighted to perform so slight a service, even though it should be at the cost of some trifling sacrifice to himself; so that his intention was to retain his present position as long as he possibly could. It was not for me to blame him; his course was unusual and contrary to ordinary laws, but it was unselfish, and he was acting with his eyes open to the consequences; and since he was able to be of much use to others as well as to his wife, the good work which he was doing would probably go far towards neutralizing any hindrance which ensued from his proceedings.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ASTRAL SURROUNDINGS.

Of the scenery, the general conditions and the inhabitants of this earlier stage of the after-world I have already written fully in *The Astral Plane*,—as fully, that is to say, as the incapacity of physical words to express astral facts will let me,—so I need not repeat myself here. If we take that description along with the idea of steady withdrawal to which I have previously referred, we shall have in our minds a broad outline of astral life which is practically universal, though the details differ widely according to individual idiosyncrasies. The world of thought-forms in which the man spends the later part of his astral life is infinite in its complexity, yet each selects from it the forms in which he is specially interested, and to a large extent ignores the rest. Men of the same nationalities, religions and interests herd together in that life just as in this, and they confirm one another's prejudices there just as here. It should be noted that they find there not only their own thought-forms, but those made by others—those, in some cases, which are the product of generations of thought from thousands of people, all following along the same lines.

#### *Interesting Creations.*

For example, bible stories, both from the old and new Testaments, have formed a subject of frequent thought to thousands of people for centuries; consequently they are represented by many very strong thought-forms. Since the majority of such thinkers

have been very ignorant, it naturally follows that the forms are usually entirely inaccurate. The peasantry of each nation have invariably represented the heroes of their stories in the costumes and surroundings familiar to them, so that we constantly find thought-pictures of the Christ and His disciples in the garb of German peasants or Italian lazzaroni, or of Joseph and his brethren dressed as English or American farmers' boys, the "coat of many colours" being usually a gaudy football jersey. Sometimes a sensitive or partially clairvoyant person still in the flesh has seen such thought-forms, and mistaken them for records or supernatural revelations of the actual occurrences, as seems to have been the case with Anne Catherine Emmerich.

Nor is it only of biblical personages that we find such representations. Many of the characters of Shakespeare's plays, and even those which are sufficiently striking among the heroes of modern novelists, may be seen more or less accurately depicted by the thought of generations of readers. I have myself seen very fair images of Becky Sharp and of the Cheeryble brothers, and most vivid and life-like portraits of Robinson Crusoe, Santa Claus, Aladdin and Ali Baba, created by the eager fancy of generations of story-loving children. It might quite easily happen to some psychic child to see these thought-images, and thus to become convinced by ocular demonstration that they must be real people. No doubt such instances of delusion have occurred many times, and not among children only.

For example, various persons have declared at different times that they have seen apparitions of the devil; and since there is certainly no such being, in all cases in which such persons were not directly hallucinated what was seen can only have been a thought-form. The

diseased imagination of the mediæval monk, always seeking the opportunity to introduce grotesquely aggravated horrors into his creed in order to terrify an incredibly ignorant peasantry into more liberal donations for the support of mother church, distorted into "eternal damnation" the perfectly simple idea of æonian suspension. Ever since then the unfortunate and deluded votaries of a hell-fire form of faith have been peopling space with hideous thought-forms of an angry God, a personal devil, of lakes of fire and of lost souls undergoing unspeakable tortures. These things also have sometimes been seen, and such visions have helped to keep up the reign of ecclesiastical terror. One can imagine the feelings of some poor victim of this abominable cult when for the first time after his death he comes in sight of some of these awful thought-forms. It is difficult to estimate the harm that has been done by that most pernicious of all doctrines, which has brooded like a curse over so many fair lands, bringing pain and sorrow and depression to the living and the dead alike, not only because of the terror which it inspired, but because it lowered and brutalized their conception of God.

#### *Artificial Scenery.*

Naturally scenery may be produced in exactly the same way as figures, and so we have the purgatory of Dante and the heavens and hells of Swedenborg. In the case of both these seers, however, symbology would seem to be mingled with their visions, and much of the truth may be read in them by those who have seen the actual state of the facts. It must not be forgotten that it is always possible either for dead people or for other non-human entities to enter and vivify one of these thought-images; and there have frequently been instances where

this was done both for good and for evil. If a wicked man or a mischievous nature-spirit has sometimes maliciously employed some ignorantly formed thought-image of a devil with a forked tail and fiery saucer-eyes, on the other hand it is true that the images of saints and angels made by innocent and truthful children have often been ensouled by living helpers, by the well-meaning among the dead, and sometimes by the great devas themselves.

Thus we see how in the visions of perfectly truthful psychics we sometimes find descriptions agreeing with fantastic popular superstitions which have no foundation in fact. Thus it comes that sometimes winged angels are still seen, while in truth the idea of the fearful labour of using such wings would entirely destroy the whole poetry of the delightful gliding motion of the astral world. So the dead man moves in this vast world of thought-forms; and he who would understand this world and gain the fullest benefit from his sojourn there must learn to distinguish the thought-form, even when vivified, from the living being, and prominent facts of the plane from the temporary moulds into which they are cast. Here once more we see how great is the advantage gained from having definitely studied these subjects while still upon the earth; the well informed among the dead, like the living helpers, will find their delight in comforting and reassuring their less fortunate brothers, and explaining to them much which without their aid might well seem strange and terrible.

#### *A Material Heaven.*

Stronger and more permanent thought-scenes of the same order constitute the churches and schools and houses of the summerland, and the heavenly city and its



angelic inhabitants of the ignorant and grossly material orthodox believer. Thousands of such men have for ages been forming their strange crude conceptions of golden streets and gates of pearl, of seas of glass mingled with fire, of crowns and harps, of prophets garbed like mediæval monks, of apostles and saints in copes and chasubles, of cherubim and seraphim with impossible feathered wings on human shoulders; and when a man of the same type dies now, he lives gradually through the earlier astral stages (sometimes regarding them truly enough as a kind of purgatory or antechamber) until in his process of withdrawal he reaches the second sub-plane (counting downwards) upon which these material celestial forms chiefly exist—which of course means that it is of that degree of matter that such thought-forms are most readily composed. In the majority of cases he hails it unquestioningly as the heaven of which he has dreamed; sometimes he feels a certain sense of incongruity, and says to himself, "I did not think that it would be exactly like this;" sometimes, if he is a little superior to his class, he experiences something of disappointment.

The steady withdrawal of the soul continues, and gradually these thought-forms also become less distinct to him, and cease to have their interest. Then very gradually there dawns upon him the conception of something infinitely greater; and then he discovers for the first time that all in which he has delighted has been in truth merely introductory, and that the reality with which he comes into touch at a later stage of his progress has a grandeur and a depth and a radiance which nothing astral can even suggest. But of this we shall treat in another chapter. Yet even of this crude materialism something may be made; the helper, showing himself to some of these undeveloped souls, has before now found

himself welcomed and identified as an angel or patron saint. In emergency of any kind it may happen that there is no time to undeceive the poor souls and to give them an explanation which they would neither believe nor understand; and so various saints have sometimes obtained credit which did not strictly belong to them! Since, however, no helper ever desires credit for what he does, or indeed ever stops to think of the matter in that light at all, this matters little—the important thing being that whenever possible assistance should be given, not that any one should know from whom it came.

*Scientific Men.*

Students who have read the Theosophical Manual upon *The Astral Plane* will remember that the highest subdivision of this region differs from all the others. Yet in this atomic condition of matter men do not build themselves imaginary conceptions, as they do at the lower levels. Here reside thinkers and men of science, keenly occupied in the pursuit of their studies, and often utilizing for that purpose almost all the powers of the entire plane, for they are able to descend almost to the physical level along certain limited lines; while far out of touch with ordinary earth-life, they can yet swoop down upon the astral counterpart of a physical book in which they are interested, and can extract from it all that it contains upon the subject in regard to which they require information. They readily come in touch with the mind of the author of any new work which attracts them; they impress their ideas upon him while receiving his in return; and sometimes they seriously delay their departure for the heaven world by the avidity with which they prosecute their lines of study and experiment on the astral plane. For them this astral life holds so much

of interest and of happiness that they feel no need of anything higher, and with difficulty credit its existence; yet in due time it comes to them as to all, and then they realize that as is the astral plane in comparison to the physical, so and much more is the mental in comparison with the astral.

*Shall We Recognize the Dead ?*

Questions are often asked as to the appearance and recognizability of the man's astral form after death. It is in all cases perfectly recognizable, although in the undeveloped man the outlines are somewhat blurred and indistinct. It will be remembered that one who possesses clairvoyant vision sees men during physical life as surrounded with a luminous ovoid mist, of which we often speak as the aura. This extends to a distance of some eighteen inches from the surface of the physical body in all directions, and is in reality exceedingly complex, since it contains matter of several planes. For the moment we are concerned only with the astral matter, which indeed is all that the ordinary clairvoyant ever sees, and if we observe that closely we shall see that it not only surrounds the physical body but also interpenetrates it, and that within the periphery of that body it is very much more densely aggregated than it is outside of it. Now the whole of this astral matter, both within and without the physical body, is part of the man's astral body; the far denser aggregation within that body is simply due to the attraction of the physical particles. To a person regarding that man with astral vision, the physical body would be entirely invisible; yet the appearance of the man would not be greatly changed, by reason of the fact that the denser astral matter marks out very clearly the outline of the form within the halo

of mist. When a man leaves his body temporarily during sleep, and permanently at death, the same arrangement of the particles is still maintained; so that although the likeness of the physical form is now built only of astral matter, it is yet distinctly recognizable.

During life the particles of the astral body are always in exceedingly rapid motion. In the case of certain types of men, or when sudden emotion affects the astral vehicle, definite bands and clearly defined lines will be seen in it, as I have shown in the series of illustrations of astral bodies given in the book *Man Visible and Invisible*; but under ordinary circumstances the clouds of colour in the astral body not only melt into one another, but are all the while rolling over one another, and appearing and disappearing as they roll. Indeed the surface of this luminous and brightly-coloured mist resembles somewhat the surface of violently-boiling water in the way in which the particles are seen to swirl about, to rise to the surface and sink back again, and constantly to change places with one another. This is the condition of affairs during life; the astral particles whose place is within the surface of the man's physical body are constantly flowing out and back again, although the general shape is clearly preserved. The same condition exists while the man is away from his physical body during sleep, and it ought to exist during the life after death; but in all ordinary cases a change takes place, the exact meaning and reason of which I will try to explain. But to do this a considerable digression will be necessary.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DESIRE-ELEMENTAL.

We have said that each incarnation of the soul is, as it were, an outbreathing and an inbreathing, for he puts something of himself outward into these lower planes and then endeavours to withdraw it again. He puts it out, as though it were an investment at interest, and he expects to gain by his investment and to draw back added experience, which will have developed new qualities within him. Let us think of him between his incarnations—when he has for the time withdrawn from manifestation upon these lower levels.

He is then an ego upon his own plane, precisely as he was before his evolution commenced, except that he has grown considerably, because he has been gradually developing and building qualities into himself. His habitat is the higher part of the mental plane, and in the case of the ordinary man such consciousness as he possesses during this interval of non-manifestation is focussed in the third level of that plane, counting from the top. The time that he will spend there (after his heaven-life and before his next descent into physical incarnation) will be but short, because at that level he is practically unconscious of his surroundings, and therefore unable to learn anything from them, since he is not yet sufficiently developed to have full consciousness there. Later, when he becomes a developed man, he will be fully conscious there, and that will be to him the most important portion of his life; later still he will centre himself in the second of those levels, and eventually upon the highest, but that will mean that

he is drawing near to the attainment of Adeptship. But, as we have said, at the stage of ordinary life, he rests upon the third, and is only dimly conscious even there. He would be practically unimpressible by any external impact there, although even then he can be to some extent affected by the presence and magnetism of a Master, much as the unopened bud may be stimulated by the sunlight which pours upon it its life-giving flood.

*How the Ego Descends.*

To gain experience and development, then, it is necessary that he should put himself down into incarnation. In the East they tell us that he is forced down by Trishna (in Pali tanha)—that is, by thirst or desire—the desire, first, to be able to express himself, and, secondly, to receive those impressions and impacts from without which alone enable him to feel himself alive; for this is the law of his evolution. He begins then to put himself outward or downward into the lower part of the mental plane, because that is nearest to his level. We must guard ourselves here against two possible misconceptions. First, he makes no movement in space, but simply endeavours to focus his consciousness at a lower level—to obtain an expression through a denser variety of matter. Secondly, this expression can never be more than a very partial one, by reason of the fact that each plane bears to those below it the same relation that a higher type of dimension bears to a lower one. Just as we know that no number of lines can ever make a square, and no number of squares can ever make a cube, so is it true that no number of manifestations simultaneously held upon the lower planes (if it were possible so to hold them—and it is possible

upon the mental plane, though not upon the physical, as will be explained later) could ever perfectly express a soul, because he has an extension in a direction which on these lower planes is entirely beyond conception. It is not possible in physical language to express exactly this matter of the descent of the ego; but until we are able to raise our own consciousness to those levels, and see exactly what takes place, the best impression we can have of it is perhaps this idea of the ego as putting down part of himself like a tongue of fire into planes of grosser matter than his own.

The moment that he enters the lower part of the mental plane he must express himself in some way, and to do that he needs the matter of that plane, just as the dead man who wishes to show himself at a séance has to materialize himself—that is to say, to draw round him matter of the physical plane in order that he may be visible to physical eyes and capable of moving physical objects. Just so this soul draws round himself such matter of the mental plane as is an exact expression of him, so far as he can be expressed in this lower type of matter—lower to him, although so much higher than anything with which we are familiar.

This conception shows us how imperfectly we must always see the true man while we are regarding him solely from the physical standpoint, as we usually do. Even when looked at on the mental plane, only so much of him can be seen as can be expressed in the mind-body, which is a manifestation of the intellectual side of him. Examining him on the astral plane, we find that an additional veil has descended, and only that lower part of him is visible which can find expression through the vehicle of desire. Here on the physical plane we are still worse off, since the true man is more

effectually hidden from us than ever. What we see of the man, therefore, is only a very small part of him, and that the worst part; so we should always remember that the soul has infinite possibilities far beyond the extremely limited representation of him which is all that we can see down here.

This mental matter which he draws about him is the material out of which his mental body will be built, and it expresses exactly the mental development which he had gained at the end of his last heaven-life. So that he begins in this respect exactly where he left off; but what kind of mental body he will build out of the material thus provided for him will depend very largely upon the conditions surrounding him in his new earth-life, and the education which is given to him. Man continues to build his mental body all through his life, and is constantly changing and adding particles, cultivating it or neglecting it, as the case may be.

### *The Mental Elemental.*

We must remember that this mental matter with which the soul surrounds himself is not dead matter. Indeed, there is no such thing as "dead matter" anywhere within our ken; for all has been vivified by that first outpouring from the Third Aspect of the Logos which I have described in *The Christian Creed*. But it is also ensouled and further vivified by the Second Outpouring, which is called monadic essence when it is ensouling the atomic matter of each of the sub-planes on its downward course, but on other sub-planes than the atomic is described as elemental essence. It thus forms the three great elemental kingdoms—the first on the higher mental level, the second on the lower division of the mental plane, with which we are now deal-



ing, and the third upon the astral plane, of which we shall have to speak directly.

It is therefore not only matter of the mental plane that he draws into himself, but also elemental essence belonging to the second of the great kingdoms. This living essence is pursuing an evolution of its own; and the instinct implanted within it leads it to seek whatever will aid that evolution. What it needs for its development is vibration; for it grows, as we ourselves do at a much higher level, by learning to respond to impacts from without. It is therefore always reaching out for varieties in vibration; it has the strongest possible objection to being held down for a long time to one definite rate.

Probably we have all of us found this to be the case in our endeavours at concentration; we have discovered that something exists within us which constantly impels us to wandering thought and vigorously resists our effort to hold it down to one definite line. It is with this force that we are struggling, as well as our own mental inertness, when we are endeavouring to gain perfect control of the mind, and to employ it as an instrument for our service, instead of letting it roam away with us at its own sweet will.

### *The Formation of the Astral.*

The soul, having thus drawn round himself the necessary mental matter, passes outward to the astral plane, and there reproduces the process. The astral matter with which he clothes himself is again the expression of him so far as that lower matter can express him; and it agrees very closely in its constituents with the astral body which he cast aside when he entered upon his last life in the heaven-world. On each of these planes

a certain part of the man manifests itself; and he practically takes up the development of that part of himself where he left it at the end of his previous experiences on that plane. So that this new astral body will contain matter exactly fitted to express all such passions and emotions as belonged to him in that last life, and it would therefore enable him, if he chose, to reproduce that life. Whether he will do this or not depends, as we said before with reference to the mental unfoldment, very largely upon his environment and education on the physical plane.

He has all the germs of those previous desires, but it is by no means necessary that all of them should grow and bear fruit. It is perfectly possible, by careful training, to make the most of all the good seeds, and to allow the evil seeds to remain entirely unvivified, by giving them none of the conditions which would be favourable for their growth. The result of this care would be that when the children grew up and reached the end of this present incarnation, the good qualities would be flourishing, spreading and increasing; but the evil qualities which had come over as a heritage from that last incarnation in which they had been indulged would have remained during this life simply as germs, because in this present life the man had not allowed them to grow to maturity. Thus as mere unvivified germs they would remain until they gradually lost their vitality, and were cast out to make room for other matter of the type which the man needs to express his more active qualities. In his future incarnation, therefore, these germs would not reappear at all, which would mean that the man had obtained the victory over those particular evils, and would be troubled with them no more in the whole course of his future history, because

the soul has now developed within himself the opposite virtues which render those evils impossible for him.

*The Living Essence.*

This astral matter, like the mental matter, is permeated with elemental essence, so that the man draws into himself a great quantity of this force, which for the time he makes a part of himself. This essence, remember, is part of the life of the Logos on its way downwards into matter, for the next stage of its evolution will be to ensoul the mineral kingdom of some future chain, and become in that what we call a mineral monad. This introduces into it certain characteristics to which it is not easy for us to accustom ourselves. To us all progress invariably means rising from the material to the spiritual; but this essence is on the downward arc, and therefore for it advancement means greater materiality, and its desire is to meet with the strongest and coarsest vibrations which it can find; whereas the man himself needs for his progress exactly the opposite conditions in every respect, to rise away as far as may be from material conditions, and to respond only to the more delicate vibrations of the higher aspirations.

This mass of living essence then inhabits the chaotic astral body which the soul has drawn round himself. Then he enters into physical incarnation and takes possession of the physical body which is being built for him in accordance with the deserts of his last life. By slow degrees as this physical body grows, the soul gains more and more control over the astral and mental matter, and begins definitely to build the vehicles through which he has to express himself during this incarnation. The material in each case is given to him, though even

that is what he himself has provided by the actions of his previous birth; but it is open to him to do what he will with this material—to use it fully or partially, to develop its possibilities diligently and increase them by careful and constant use, or to let them languish for want of employment. As he grows, the desires begin to develop within him, and he allows himself to feel certain emotions, in order to build this chaotic astral matter into a definite astral body full of colour and vibration. The same process is also taking place with the mental body, but let us for the moment devote ourselves to the consideration of the formation of the astral.

*A Temporary Entity.*

This living essence which the man has drawn into himself is temporarily separated from the sea of life from which it came, and thus has really for the time an existence as a separate entity in a body—the man's astral body. Now the characteristics of elemental essence are peculiar. It cannot be said to possess any intelligence, because it is not yet even at the level of a mineral, and we are not in the habit of crediting the mineral with anything that can be called intelligence. Yet this essence has an extraordinary power of adapting itself to its surroundings, and extracting from them what it needs, which certainly does sometimes look very much like a partial intelligence or very keen instinct. We have said that its evolution is by means of vibration, and vibration in the astral plane is always the result of passion or emotion of some sort. Consequently when floating in the atmosphere this essence depends for its development upon the surges of passion or emotion which reach it from the various living crea-

tures which are sufficiently developed to have such feelings. This will include not only men, but animals and also nature-spirits and that lowest order of the deva evolution which bears in Sanskrit the name of kâma-deva to indicate that it is still subject to the action of desire. It is obvious, considering the vast sea of elemental essence, that it would be only occasionally that any particular particle of it would come within the vibration sent forth from any of these living beings.

But those particles which are drawn into and form part of the astral body of a man are themselves for a time at one of the centres from which such vibration radiates, and so will be experiencing it continually, and they will consequently get very much more of it in any given time than if they had remained in the general sea of essence outside. The curious half-instinct which the essence possesses seems to be quite sufficient to enable those particles to be somehow conscious of this; they somehow realize that they are in a desirable position, and they coalesce into what must be described as a kind of temporary entity, inspired by (and sufficiently self-conscious to have) the determination to maintain its position of advantage. The particles of the astral body are perpetually being thrown off and changed, just as is the case with the physical body; but nevertheless the feeling of individuality is communicated to the new particles as they enter, and the essence which is included within each man's astral body undoubtedly feels itself a kind of entity, and acts accordingly for what it considers its interests.

#### *Opposing Interests.*

These interests, as will be seen from what has been previously said, are usually diametrically opposed to

those of the soul. The soul desires the highest and purest vibrations, and reaches ever upward away from the material. This desire-elemental, on the contrary, craves ever stronger and coarser vibrations, and is reaching ever downwards more and more deeply into matter. Hence there is a perpetual struggle between the two—or, as St. Paul describes it, “the law in the members warring against the law of the mind.” But it goes even further than this. This entity finds involved within itself finer matter of some sort—the matter of the man’s mind-body; and it presently discovers by experience that when that matter vibrates synchronously with its own it obtains much more vivid vibration and much more of it. Consequently it learns that if it can contrive to stir up this finer matter into sympathy with it—that is to say, from our point of view, if it can induce us to believe that *we* desire that sensation which it desires—it will get a good deal more of it. Consequently it becomes to us a sort of tempter, trying to create in us desires for all sorts of gross sensations.

Nevertheless we must be careful not to fall into the old theological delusion that this is an evil entity, a devil intentionally attempting to drag us down into the commission of sin. This elemental is not evolving as an entity at all; it has no power of reincarnation as a whole; it is only the essence of which it is composed which is in process of evolution. Nor has even this shadowy being any evil design upon us. Absorbed in itself, it knows nothing whatever about the man of whom for the time it forms a part; it would be entirely impossible that it should in any way comprehend him, or know anything about his type of evolution. If it could in any blind way sense his upward strivings, they could only seem

to it in turn as temptations, dragging it backwards from the course of evolution in which it was destined to proceed.

But as a matter of fact it can know nothing whatever about the man; it realizes only that here is a condition in which it can obtain sensation, and the more vivid it is the better it is pleased. It cannot in the least matter to it whether the sensation is pleasant or painful to the man; it is simply pursuing its own development, and is utterly unconscious that it may be producing serious effects with regard to a higher type of progress which, if it could see it, would necessarily appear to it to be no progress at all, but retrogression. So it is in no way a fiend to be regarded with horror; it is as much a part of the divine life as the man himself, only at a different stage of its unfoldment.

So from our point of view its action is often a "temptation"; we say that our desires are surging downwards and are causing us much trouble; whereas, if we could only realize it, they are not our desires at all, but those of the elemental. It is very true that this elemental life within us is what we have made it, and is an expression of ourselves. If in a previous life we had controlled and purified our desires, then we should find ourselves in association with a desire-elemental of a much pleasanter type, instead of one with low sensual vibrations which are necessarily objectionable to us now that we are striving to live a purer and higher life. We ourselves have created it, yet that is no reason why we should become slaves to it, but on the contrary we must learn to control it and realize ourselves as apart from it. How can we best deal with it ?

*How to Cope With It.*

First of all, we must clearly realize that we are always to identify ourselves with the higher and not with the lower in any struggle which takes place. We must not say or think to ourselves, "I want this or that lower thing." Each must say to himself, "I want whatever will help my unfoldment as a soul, whatever will help me and will help others to reach a higher level. I want none of these lower things." When strong vibrations sweep through his astral body, when a wild wave of anger or a rush of sensuality comes over the man, he must not think, "I want to get into a rage," or "I want to do something to injure some one." On the contrary, he must think, "My desire is to keep cool, to keep out of this disturbance. Here is this desire-elemental very anxious to get me into a rage in order to give it the pleasure of anger, or to make me indulge in acts of sensuality in order that it may receive the strong vibrations connected with it. I shall not give it that gratification; I shall attend to my own business as a soul. It is not I who want all these low, horrible things—not I who am grasping after them and endeavouring to obtain them. Why, then, should I so far lower my dignity as to allow myself to be used for its own objects by something which is not yet even a mineral?"

The important thing is that the man should realize that he is the higher force, always moving towards and battling for good, while this lower force is not he at all, but only an uncontrolled fragment of one of his lower vehicles. He must learn to control it, to dominate it absolutely, and to keep it in order; but he should not therefore think of it as evil, but as an outpouring of the divine power moving on its orderly course, though



that course in this instance happens to be downwards into matter, instead of upwards and away from it, as ours is.

*Misplaced Tenderness.*

Some of our Theosophical students are so tender-hearted, and have developed the theory of unselfishness to such an extent, that they seem to feel that we ought to consider the feelings of this poor elemental, and give it something of what it desires. The feeling is estimable, but not rational. If we unfortunately have in our astral body essence of the type which desires the coarser sensations, that essence is very distinctly out of place in our vehicle. It would obtain what it desires much more efficaciously if it formed part of the astral body of a dog, or of some still lower animal, and the sooner we cast it out and replace it by essence of a higher type, the better it will be for us.

We have a duty towards the elemental essence, but it is to provide vehicles for that higher variety of it which could not otherwise develope at all. All the lower conditions may just as well be evolved in the bodies of savages and of animals; there is an enormous field for such development among our less advanced fellow-men, as well as in the whole animal kingdom; and there is no reason whatever why we should go out of our way to do other people's work and leave our own higher task undone. By refusing to gratify the lower desires, we are gradually changing the essence within us and building a different creature, for all the low particles which are thrown out are replaced by higher and finer ones. If we control our desires and live the Theosophical life, we shall close this incarnation with a very much better type of desire-elemental than we brought with us at birth.

*The Rearrangement.*

When the physical body is dropped at death the whole arrangement of the sheaths which constitute the personality may be said to be beginning to break up, and the disintegration of the astral body is even already commencing. The desire-elemental feels this instinctively, and at once takes fright. It fears that it will lose this habitation which is enabling it to remain apart from the rest of the essence and is thus giving it an unusual opportunity for progress; and so it immediately sets to work to protect itself. Its method is a very ingenious one, for it rearranges the particles of matter in the astral body so that they will resist disintegration as long as possible. When the astral body finally dissipates that will be the end of the elemental as a separate entity, so it is fighting for its life, as it were.

By this rearrangement of the astral body it has the man to a great extent still in its power, although it knows nothing of all that. It lays the matter of the denser part of the astral body in concentric shells, so that only the densest is on the outside and is exposed to friction. Usually it does not interfere at all with the small amount of matter which lay outside the surface of the physical body and formed the luminous ovoid mist. It knows well that it can afford to neglect that, and proceeds to intrench itself securely in the enormously greater mass of denser astral matter which exists within what was previously the physical shape. But the result of this proceeding is most undesirable for the comfort and the progress of the soul, whose object is now to withdraw into himself as speedily as possible. The prolongation of the astral life is therefore in itself

undesirable; but that is by no means all the harm that is done.

Since the grosser matter alone is upon the outside of the body, it is only through that matter that impressions from without can be received; and since each type of matter within the man receives and responds to the vibrations of a similar type without, this means that the man can be conscious only of that lowest variety of astral matter which corresponds to the solid down here. His astral life therefore will be of the most material character possible, and all the higher and more beautiful aspects of the plane will be for the time non-existent for him. That is what is meant by being confined to a particular sub-plane—not that the man is in any way limited in his movements, but that his consciousness receives its impressions only through one type of matter, and thus obtains an exceedingly partial view of the world in which his lot is cast. All that is best and brightest and most beautiful in it is hidden from him; the higher influences of the plane cannot pierce this veil of denser matter, and thus he is detained in close touch with the earth, and is unable to find those of his friends who have already reached higher levels.

*Its Evil Effect.*

In fact, this rearrangement interferes constantly with the man's true and full vision of his friend at all stages of their astral life, unless they leave the physical plane almost simultaneously. For if a man who after death finds himself upon one of the lower sub-planes wishes to search for a friend who has passed over twelve or fifteen years earlier, it is probable that that friend may have already transferred his consciousness to a higher level, and thus the newcomer (who would be

able to see only that matter in his friend's astral vehicle which belonged to his own lower sub-plane) would find him only half-conscious of him—dreamy and distracted, and constantly drawing away in thought to the higher things in which his interest would really be centred.

As people gradually withdraw, and their consciousness is focussed upon the loftier sub-planes, they are visible as active living entities only upon those, and on the lower levels they normally appear merely as unconscious shells. Yet some matter of those lower levels still remains to them, and the consciousness can be temporarily called back into that matter by sufficiently strong stimulation of it. This is frequently the result of the uncontrolled grief of friends still on the physical plane, and also of attempts to communicate with a dead man through mediumship. So affection for one who was confined to the lower levels might call back for a few fleeting moments his friend's full consciousness into those sub-planes, but in the majority of cases it cannot long be held there. Though they stood side by side in the astral world, the friend's attention would be occupied almost entirely with the thought-forms, and that of the newcomer with the counterparts of physical objects. Each to the other would seem dim and unreal; each to the other would seem to be living in a world of shadows. To the older inhabitant of the astral world the thought-forms about him would be the living and vivid realities. The newcomer's astral body, containing as it does matter of the higher subdivisions also, would be visible to him; but as the consciousness would not be focussed in the part which he would see most clearly, it would appear to him as all but unconsciousness. If the affection between them was deep and real, it would probably enable both of them for the

moment to dominate the desire-elemental, and see one another almost fully; but the arrangement of concentric shells would usually soon reassert itself, and each would again become more shadowy to the other.

*The Advantage of Declining.*

The man who declines to submit to this rearrangement in concentric shells escapes all this difficulty and disappointment. At whatever level his friend's consciousness may be active, he can meet him at just that point, and converse with him fully and freely. In many cases he can do much more than this, for, having himself escaped from the thralldom of the desire-elemental, he can show his friend how to liberate himself also; and in this way both of them may live a far happier and more useful astral life than would have been possible without that effort.

The ordinary man, knowing nothing whatever about this, accepts these arrangements of the desire-elemental as a part of the new and strange conditions which surround him, and supposes himself to be seeing the whole of the *post-mortem* world, when in reality he has only an extremely partial view of one of its sub-planes. But there is no reason whatever why the student of occultism, who understands the situation, should tamely submit himself to the sway of this elemental after death, any more than he did during life. He will of course decline to permit the case-hardening which would confine him to a single sub-plane, and will insist upon keeping open his communications with the higher astral levels as well. Thus he will be in practically the same position as he was when he passed into the astral world in sleep during earth-life, and therefore will be able to move about much more freely and make

himself much more useful than if he allowed himself to be the slave of the lower desires.

The effort to resist the rearrangement, and restore the astral body to its former condition, is precisely similar to that which has to be made in resisting a very strong desire during physical life. The elemental is afraid in its curious semi-conscious way, and it will endeavour to transfer its fear to the man; so that the latter will constantly find a strong instinct creeping over him of indescribable danger which can only be avoided by permitting the rearrangement. If, however, he steadily resists this unreasoning sense of dread by the calm assertion of his own knowledge that there is no cause for fear, he will in time wear out the resistance of the elemental, just as he has resisted the prompting of desire many a time during his earth-life. Thus he will become a living power during his astral life, able to carry on the work of helping others just as he used to do during his hours of sleep. So once again we see the exceeding advantage of accurate knowledge with regard to these after-death conditions.

## CHAPTER IX.

### AN EXTENSION OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

One of the peculiarities of this higher world which we must always take into account if we wish to image it in our minds is that there one of the limitations which on all sides surround our consciousness here has been removed. In our physical life we are conscious only of three dimensions of space—not because only these three dimensions exist, but because only these three are normally within the grasp of the physical brain. We are in reality living in space of many dimensions, and the limits imposed upon our comprehension of it at different stages are always within our own consciousness only, and so are truly subjective. We see what we are capable of seeing, but there is always an infinity more than we see. On the astral plane we are yet very far from the full realization of the divine faculties which exist in man; but at least we are one stage nearer to that realization, in that one limitation has already dropped away.

Even this alteration, infinitesimal though it be in comparison to what lies beyond it, is so great from the point of view of the physical plane that we can with difficulty understand even a little of what it means. However careful a description may be given, the idea cannot be conveyed in physical language. All that one can do is to indicate the main points in such a way that one who has a little experience of that condition can deduce the rest; but one who has not yet seen even a little can hope to grasp it only very partially. When

we look at a picture of a landscape, we obtain from it the idea of how the landscape would appear if we were to see it in reality; but that is because we have seen other landscapes, and our mind knows the general characteristics and can supply what is lacking. But if we showed that picture to some one who had never seen a landscape in nature, he would not in the least understand from it the real appearance of the landscape. For in truth a picture is misleading in almost every particular; its lines and angles cannot be an exact reproduction of those which they represent, because the landscape is not drawn as it is in reality, but only as it appears to man from a certain standpoint. So if we were unable to allow for perspective and for the varying proportions in the picture, we should gain no true idea of the various objects which were represented in it. In exactly the same way, with the best intentions and intelligence at our disposal, we frequently form erroneous conceptions of the higher planes of nature from the descriptions which are given to us; and this is from no fault of ours or of those who describe it to us, but simply from the inherent difficulty of the subject.

*The Best Way to Understand.*

Short of actual astral sight, the study of the fourth dimension is the best method that I know to obtain a conception of the conditions which prevail upon the astral plane. It is possible by this means to conceive in the physical brain some of the simplest forms which belong to this higher order of space. This undoubtedly requires a considerable effort on the part of the physical brain, because in making this attempt we are taking it entirely out of its ordinary lines, and making a demand upon it for the development of fresh powers.



Still, the healthy brain will respond to this demand; and, so far as it is successful, it enables us to grasp something of the reality concerning the forms on the astral plane, and this cannot but result in a wider range of ideas and a larger conception of the real meaning of life and space. This method of reaching this higher conception is not equally easy to all. Some find it a most fascinating study, and grasp its broad principles very readily; to others the whole thing seems quite incomprehensible, and they cannot believe it to be possible that they could ever learn to grasp it.

This subject may be treated in various ways. My own interest in it was first aroused by reading the *Scientific Romances* of Mr. C. H. Hinton, and I will try to give in the next few pages an outline of some of his ideas on the subject. If in doing so I can interest some of my readers sufficiently to make them study Mr. Hinton's books for themselves, I feel sure that they will be much more than repaid for any trouble that it costs them. Mr. Hinton himself does not treat the matter as an approach to the comprehension of the astral plane; indeed, I am not certain that he so much as believes that there is an astral plane; he is regarding it simply as a higher conception of physical space, as a truth existing in the physical world, and to be recognized by those who will take the trouble of studying it sufficiently deeply. It is all that, but it is also a great deal more; and while it is quite true that physical space has more dimensions than we know, it is also true that the astral world interpenetrates the physical, and that in this way we can learn to understand something about that world. I certainly could not guarantee to any one studying the fourth dimension that by that means he would develop within himself the power of astral sight,

though there have been those who have accomplished that feat in precisely that manner; but assuredly a careful study of this subject will give the clearer conception and the broader ideas of which I have spoken.

*Our Limitations.*

Our conception of space includes the idea of a limit—a fact which is clearly recognized by the great Oriental writers, who speak repeatedly of a consciousness surpassing time and space. They regard these latter merely as limits of our consciousness and not as necessary or as really existing. It is not easy to make this idea clear to those whose consciousness has never within their memory transcended the physical plane; but all who have been able to raise their consciousness to the higher planes of nature know that there is a level beyond which time and space as we know them do not exist. Here on the physical plane, where this limitation called space does exist, we know it as three-dimensional. We know only of length and breadth and height; and we are unable to think of any direction which cannot be expressed by means of those three dimensions. That is to say, any movement which it is possible for us to conceive may be analyzed into three movements. For example, if we wish to move an object from any point within a room to any other point we can do it by a combination of three movements in straight lines in three directions, each at right angles to the two others. First, supposing our object to be lying upon the floor; by two movements on the floor which shall be at right angles to each other we can bring that object directly underneath any point where we may wish to place it. We have then only to raise it along another straight line at right angles to both the former, and we shall attain the desired position.

In our ordinary physical consciousness we cannot think of another line which is perpendicular to each of these three. We cannot think of it—but that does not prove that it does not exist, but only that it is unimaginable for our intellect. The only way for us to learn to know something about it is to reason along the line of correspondences, and to begin by thinking of a being whose consciousness is more limited than our own. We can perceive three dimensions; let us imagine a being that can perceive only two. We do not know whether such beings exist; it is possible that the consciousness of some microbes may be such as that, but we have no certain knowledge of it.

*A Two-Dimensional Life.*

Think of some such microbe, and suppose him to be living upon the surface of a sheet of paper. To him that sheet of paper might well seem to be the whole world, and we suppose him strictly limited to its surface. Not only could he never leave the surface, either by rising above it or by burying himself in it, but he could never have any conception of the meaning of our words up and down. Although he lived upon a surface, he would not know that it was only a surface; to him that superficies of the thickness of an atom would be the world in which he lived. Imagine that this creature could reason; could he arrive in any way at the conception of the third dimension of up and down, which was absolutely invisible to him, and entirely outside of any experience which he has ever yet imagined? In order to arrive at this, let us see what his limitations would be, and how any three-dimensional objects which came in his way would appear to him.

Notice, first, that considerations of size do not enter into the question. Our sheet of paper might just as well be imagined as many miles in length, and in that case our microbe might be larger. So long as he is an entity only one atom thick, and does not know of that thickness, his atom may be of any size that we choose. Notice that a line drawn on the paper would be for him an insurmountable obstacle. If we drew a line completely across the paper, that line would divide his world into two separate parts, and he could know of no way to pass from one part to another, for his world, being only the thickness of an atom, would be completely shut off by the line drawn on the paper (since that is of course composed of atoms of ink or of plum-bago) from another world of the same nature which might be lying close to and beside his own, divided from it only by the thickness of the line. He would be entirely unconscious of what took place on the other side of that line, even though it might be all but touching him.

We look down upon this world of his from our space of three dimensions, and so we could easily produce phenomena for him which from his point of view would seem miraculous. We could take some object out of that other world so close to his, lift it across the line, and drop it into his world; that would be to him an apparition which he would be absolutely unable to explain. If we drew a square round this little creature, then he would be in a limited space which was absolutely closed in all the directions of which he knew anything. To him it would be utterly inconceivable that any other creature or thing could enter that square without passing through one of its sides, yet we could very easily make some object or some entity appear be-

side him; it could remain long enough for him to be convinced of its absolute reality, and then we could make it vanish as abruptly as it came. A smaller square or figure of any shape would be to him a closed box, but obviously no box or safe which he could construct would ever be closed to us, because we are all the time looking down upon it and approaching it from quite a different direction, which is totally inconceivable to him. He knows of no way in which anything can approach him or can be moved except along the surface of his world; yet we could at any moment drop something into his world in a way that to him would be inexplicable.

With very little trouble we could also overthrow entirely his idea of distance. Suppose we marked a point near one edge of the paper and another point near the opposite edge; for him there is the entire width of the world between these points, and for him there could be no way to pass from one to the other except by journeying across the entire surface. We with our three-dimensional knowledge can bend that paper and bring these two points close together; we can even make them touch. Remember that this creature could not possibly know that his world could be bent, because in order to bend it we must move in a space of which no conception is as yet possible to him. Therefore the result to him would be that a place which he knew and could prove (by journeying to it in the ordinary way) to be at the other side of his world could nevertheless be brought so close to him as to be instantaneously attainable. Thus from his point of view another miracle would have been performed—something entirely beyond and in apparent opposition to all the laws of nature of which he had known anything. It is easy to see that with our knowledge of three di-

mensions we could play all kinds of tricks upon this entity who knew only of two.

It is a very curious thing that precisely similar tricks can be played and are constantly being played upon us. Everyone who has inquired into spiritualism and its phenomena knows that just such things as we have been describing constantly happen at séances. Frequently an object is taken from a closed box, or some other entity present will show that for him the box is not closed, by reading something which is written within it. Frequently also someone will appear beside us and then will suddenly vanish again, in a way to us inexplicable. It is obvious that one way in which we could account for such phenomena would be by supposing the existence of a fourth dimension, bearing precisely the same relation to our three dimensions which they would bear to two. If such a dimension exists, then any being functioning in it and understanding its laws could treat us precisely as we might treat the two-dimensional microbe, and perform for us many wonders without in any way contravening perfectly well-known natural laws.

*Mathematically Considered.*

Let us look at the question from another point of view. Suppose we have a straight line two inches long. If the inch is our unit of length, then we can represent the line by the number 2. According to geometry this line is produced by the moving of a point in a certain direction; if now we move this line in a direction perpendicular to itself for a distance of two inches, then we produce by that movement a square, which we can represent mathematically by the number  $2^2$ . Now if you move this square at right angles to itself for the

distance of two inches, it will describe a cube of which every side is two inches long, which can be represented mathematically by the number  $2^3$ . Here you have three figures produced by movements which correspond to each other; the point produces a line, the line a square, and the square a cube; and those three figures correspond in geometry to the mathematical numbers 2,  $2^2$ , and  $2^3$ .

Geometrically we can carry this series of operations no further, but in mathematics we can raise the number to the fourth power, or to any power desired. Now these mathematical expressions might have some correspondences in the true geometry of space. What, then, is the shape of the solid which would correspond to the figure  $2^4$ ? Since this is a shape which we cannot materially demonstrate, we must try to imagine what kind of a solid it would be. The endeavour to examine this figure is the attempt to attain the knowledge of the fourth dimension. But in order to understand what are the factors in our problem, we must trace how each of these figures (which we already know) was deduced from the one before it.

First let us notice that, although it is perfectly true that the surface of the square, the side of which is given as 2, can be represented by  $2^2$ , yet the unit by which that square is measured is very different from the unit of the line. We spoke, for instance, of a line two inches long; and when we wish to indicate the size of the square which is the result of the movement of that line, we multiply the number 2 by itself. But you will see that the unit by which we describe the size of the square is a totally different one; it is not an inch in long measure, but a square inch, and no number of units of the first kind could ever com-

pose a single unit of the second kind; for the definition of a line is that it has length without breadth, and therefore no number of mathematical lines could ever make a square, because they have no breadth. Of course it also follows from this that no one has ever seen a true line, for that which has no breadth would be invisible to us; therefore all the lines that we draw are inaccurate, and do not truly represent the mathematical conception of a line.

Exactly the same is the case with the square, which produces a cube by moving at right angles to itself. Our definition of a square would give it length and breadth, but no thickness; so no number of squares piled upon one another could ever make a cube. If we wish to measure the cube we must multiply the figure 2 by itself twice, but even then the unit employed must be the one belonging to the new dimension. It can be neither an inch nor a square inch—it must be a cubic inch. So it will be noticed that for each new dimension we have an entirely different unit, and that the measurement in the higher dimension can never be expressed in the units of the dimension below it.

A second point to be noticed is that when we move one of these figures in order to produce another, every point in it must produce its corresponding line. When we move a line at right angles to itself to produce a square, we must suppose that not only the ends of the line produce the new lines which make the limits of the square, but that every point along the whole length of that line also moves, and, moving, draws a new line. In the same way, when by moving a square we produce a cube, it is not only the four lines which make the periphery of a square which produce squares in turn, but every point in the whole surface



of the square must correspondingly move at right angles to its surface, and do its share of the work of the production of the cube. Remember that a square does not consist merely of the four lines which we draw to indicate its limits, but that the whole superficies included within those lines is a square. Notice also that when we rise to a higher dimension, no point of the inside of the lower figure is hidden from us, because we are looking down upon it in such a way that no one point in it can possibly cover any other point.

When we apply all this to the moving of a cube in this new and unimaginable direction which is at right angles to all of these dimensions, what kind of figure shall we produce? The first thing that we must understand is that this new figure, whatever it may be, cannot be measured by any measure of which we know at present. No number of cubes could ever make such a figure, because it has a fourth measure, which no cube possesses, and therefore the very unit of its measurement must be entirely different.

### *The Tesseract.*

By inference from all this and by careful reasoning, Mr. Hinton deduces certain facts about this new figure, to which he gives the name of a tesseract; and he explains that it must have sixteen points, thirty-two lines, and twenty-four surfaces, and that it must be bounded by eight cubes, just as a line is bounded by two points, a square by four lines, and a cube by six surfaces, while a cube has also twelve lines and eight points.

Suppose that such a figure as this really exists and that we should see it, what would be the impression that it would make upon our senses? Obviously we could

only see it as a cube. To see how this would be so, let us think once more of our creature in two dimensions. Suppose that we were to place a cube upon the surface of his world. This would be to him, as before, a mysterious apparition—a materialization, as it were, but how would it look from his point of view? He could see only that part of it which was in contact with his surface, and therefore obviously it must seem to him a square. He could only present the object to himself in the form of his own limited consciousness. This is as far as his understanding would take him, for he could not in the least comprehend what we mean by a cube. In just the same way we on the physical plane should necessarily see a tesseract as a cube.

How, then, could we with our limited consciousness obtain any idea of the real appearance of that figure? Those who have studied embryology know how the embryo in its different stages is investigated. For example, the investigator takes eggs in different stages of incubation and cuts them into very thin slices, and then examines these sections under a microscope. In each section there is only a very small part of the form of the embryo—in fact, it is so thin that it may almost be considered as two-dimensional. But by combining the thought-image of all those different sections, he obtains from those two-dimensional images an idea of the form of the embryo, which has three dimensions. So if we wished to give to a two-dimensional being an idea of a three-dimensional object, we should have to do it by means of a series of two-dimensional sections, and he would have to try to combine his thought-images of all these sections and exercise his imagination to conceive in that way something which is beyond

his normal comprehension. This, therefore, is what we must do if we wish to represent to ourselves even the simplest of four-dimensional figures. We think of a series of sections and try to combine them in our mind; and those sections will always be for us three-dimensional figures, such as a cube.

We find ourselves seemingly surrounded by three-dimensional objects. But if there be a four-dimensional space, then some or all those objects may well have four dimensions, while we only see of them what our limitation permits. For example, all our fellow-creatures may be four-dimensional beings, and therefore there may be in all of them (as indeed we know from quite other considerations that there is) much more than we are able to see. A person might be here on this plane quite an ordinary one, and yet one who could see in the other dimensions the unknown part, which we call the soul, might see a much higher and grander development.

Mr. Hinton gives in his books many very beautiful examples of the possibilities attaching to a world of four dimensions. One of these I should like to attempt to reproduce; though to comprehend it fully and clearly will need a considerable and sustained effort of concentration.

#### *A Beautiful Analogy.*

We must return again to our microbe of two dimensions; but let us suppose this time that instead of the surface of a piece of paper he lives on a thin sheet of wax. Suppose now that we pass a thread through this sheet of wax and hold it perpendicular between our hands, one hand being above the sheet of wax and one below it. If, keeping the thread tight and perpendicular,

we moved it through the wax either up or down, it would be impossible for the microbe to understand its motion. He could see only the hole in his surface and that particle of the thread which for the moment filled the hole. If the thread were thicker in some parts than in others, or if some parts of it were differently coloured, then he would be conscious of a change in the size or the colour of the particle which he saw. It would be quite impossible for him to conceive of the string as a whole. If you passed a cone through his sheet, introducing it point first, to him it would appear as a small circle which suddenly and quite unaccountably manifested itself, which then steadily grew larger and larger and finally vanished as suddenly and mysteriously as it came. He could have no conception that all these stages of growth, which must necessarily appear to him as successive in time, were in reality only different parts of the whole, and were in existence simultaneously in a space beyond his own.

But now suppose instead of holding the thread perpendicular, we hold it at an angle of 45 degrees, still keeping it tight between the hands. If now we move the hands vertically as before (not diagonally), we shall make, in the surface of the wax sheet, not a hole but a slit. If we endow the wax with the faculty of closing up after the thread has cut through it, then our motion will produce a moving hole in that sheet. The motion of the hole would be rapid if the inclination of the thread to the perpendicular was very great, while it would be correspondingly slow as the inclination of the thread approached the perpendicular. But all the time the appearance to our microbe would be only that of the moving hole, or rather the moving particle which filled the hole; and naturally he could not

but suppose that its lateral movement in his world was its true and only movement. Thus we see how entirely he would fall under the dominion of delusion, since the only real movement concerned would be that of the thread as a whole in a direction either upwards or downwards.

Now suppose that instead of one thread held between the hands, we have many hundreds of threads fixed in a frame and set at all possible angles, not as parallel lines, but some crossing, some knotted together and forming all kinds of different angles with each other; and suppose that the whole frame with all its threads stretched tight is moved slowly and steadily upwards. To our microbe the effect produced will be that of an immense number of moving points all entirely separate one from the other. This would seem to him a veritable chaos, some of the points moving towards each other, perhaps coming together for a time and then again separating; some moving in this direction and some in that, some slowly and some rapidly, but all apparently entirely separate and distinct, and without any kind of order among them. This chaos of moving points might well seem to the microbe to be a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and its wild confusion would be all the movement and life of which he was conscious. Yet we, looking down upon the whole transaction from our higher dimension, see that all the apparent confusion is simply a delusion produced by the microbe's limitations, and that the only movement which is really taking place is the slow but steady upward movement of the frame of threads, of whose very existence the poor microbe is necessarily totally ignorant.

"Which things are an allegory," for our own case

is an exactly similar one. All the movement that we see about us, all the apparently wild confusion and entanglement in the lives of our fellow-creatures, are in reality nothing but a part of the one mighty upward movement of evolution under the divine law, and when we can learn to look down upon it from a higher level, outside and above it all, we shall be able to see that this is so. Mr. Hinton works out this hypothesis very carefully and beautifully, and shows that many of the phenomena known to science could be clearly explained from this point of view. It is very interesting to notice that in order that such a system should be workable, it would be necessary to postulate certain conditions with regard to the arrangements of the threads; and it is very remarkable that these conditions precisely correspond to the inherent qualities of matter as we know it.

#### *Further Suggestions.*

There are many other phenomena which would be susceptible of explanation along this line; and they are phenomena of most varied kinds and are taken from all departments of scientific knowledge. For example, Mr. Hinton suggests on the strength of this an entirely new and ingenious theory of gases. We know that a liquid, poured on a flat surface, spreads out in two dimensions, whilst a free gas tends always to expand or to spread itself out in three dimensions. As a liquid spreads out in two dimensions it grows smaller in its third dimension—that is to say, in its depth. Is it not then possible that as a gas spreads out in three dimensions it may be becoming smaller in the fourth, and so that the density of a gas may be

the measure of its relative thickness in the fourth dimension ?

We often meet in this world with objects which are reflections of one another—as, for instance, our right and left hands, which are in all points similar, and yet can never be so twisted or turned about as that one could take the place of another. If, however, we take a pair of the gloves that we wear upon them, and turn one of them inside out, we shall then find that they are precisely similar in shape. If we draw two right-angled triangles, facing different ways, and then cut them out of the paper, it will be found quite impossible by any movement of one of them upon the surface of a table to make it take exactly the same appearance as the other; but it can be done in a moment by simply lifting one of them from the surface of the table, turning it over and replacing it. Just as by turning over the two-dimensional object in three dimensions we can change it into its looking-glass reflection, may it not be possible that by turning over a three-dimensional object in the fourth dimension a precisely similar result may be produced? Along this line Mr. Hinton suggests a possibility of accounting for some of the most remarkable phenomena connected with electricity, and is even able to deduce from this theory of the fourth dimension the necessity of many universally recognized laws of ethics.

#### *Casting Out the Self.*

We who are Theosophical students realize that the first step on the path of true progress is to get rid of the self, to cast aside the delusion of separateness, and thus to develop perfect unselfishness and learn to work for the benefit of humanity. It is surely

more than a coincidence that the first step necessary for the successful and practical study of the fourth dimension is what Mr. Hinton calls "casting out the self." We have to eliminate the self in our thinking, and to give up entirely our present point of view. We have to work with a number of cubes, such as are used by children at the Kindergarten, and with those cubes we have to build a larger cube; and then we have to learn to see all these cubes in their relation to one another within the body of the larger cube of which they form a part. Naturally we should begin by thinking of one cube as above or below another, as before or behind another, or to the right or to the left; but all of these are radically false conceptions of their relations, for they describe only their relations towards *us* and our personal point of view, not in the least their real and abstract relations. What we want is the real connection between those cubes, and we must keep ourselves and our attitude entirely out of the question. For most people this is an exceedingly difficult lesson to learn; but so also is it difficult to learn the unselfishness on higher planes of which this is only a mechanical illustration. Nevertheless in both cases it must be attained before development can take place.

If there be among our students any to whom this slight outline of the subject appeals, I should certainly recommend them to procure Mr. Hinton's books, and take up this fascinating study in earnest. I hear from him that he has now in view yet another statement of his theory, which he believes will be simpler for the majority of people than that which he has already put forth. Many of our members, I feel sure, will look forward to his forthcoming publication with great



interest. There may be some to whom the direct development of astral sight along the lines of concentration, meditation, contemplation, which I shall presently describe, may seem simpler than the approach to the problem along this more mathematical line; yet I feel quite certain that no one can take up this study without very great benefit, if he is able to understand anything at all of its beauty. He may or may not succeed thereby in developing astral sight, or in gaining within his physical perception a clear idea of the form of a tesseract, but at least his studies cannot but give him a new point of view, and in this way they cannot fail very much to widen his perception.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE WORK OF THE HELPERS.

What then, it is sometimes asked, has Theosophy to tell us with regard to preparation for death? As we have said before, the only really effective preparation for death is a well-spent life, and for the rest the less we worry ourselves about its approach the better. Assuredly it is well for us thoroughly to familiarize ourselves with all the teaching which has been given in our books on the subject, not only in order that we may know clearly so far as may be what is about to happen to us, but also that we may be prepared to deal confidently with any unforeseen emergency that may arise, either in our own experience or in that of those whom we wish to help. It is of great importance that we should accustom ourselves to feel death to be a perfectly natural and normal event, and learn to look forward to it not only without the slightest apprehension, but with joy, as the end for the time of the weariness of physical existence and the entrance into a higher life, where the opportunities for doing useful and helpful work are in many ways much greater than on this plane.

It is clear that the more thorough and accurate is our knowledge of the astral life and its conditions, the more useful we shall be as guides, as friends and comforters to those who pass through the portals of death without having had our advantages in the way of preparation for the change. It is a valuable exercise for us to consider the different cases requiring help that we should be likely to encounter in that other

world, and think how we should best deal with them; for even now during our hours of sleep we may seek out those among the dead who need our assistance, and so practice in the intervals of our physical life what may well be our principal occupation when we have done with this particular body.

*A Familiar Field.*

If we have done this, when the hour of death comes to us there will be in it nothing unfamiliar or terrifying. We shall simply step out on the astral plane once more, as we have so often done before, and we shall find ourselves at once on familiar ground and among friends. Those whom we have tried to help during sleep—(under the heavy disadvantage of having constantly to wake up—or rather *down*—to the physical plane, and to break our connection with them for many hours) will welcome with delight our arrival for a more continuous sojourn. There can be no strangeness and hesitation for us, for we shall fall naturally into the accustomed work, and resume our ministrations to those who have already found them so helpful. Having more time at our disposal, we shall be able to widen the field of our astral activities, and to be of use on a much larger scale than before.

*The Seriousness of the Need.*

There is so much that these poor souls do not know, so much that is perplexing and confusing to them, because of the scandalous neglect of their churches and ministers to find and provide for them true and rational information as to the after-life. Some of them cling passionately to so much of the earth-life as they can still see and feel, for since they have never hitherto

had any thoughts or interests beyond the physical, everything outside of it seems empty and unreal to them, and they dread it in the same vague way as ill-taught children dread the dark. They cannot and will not let themselves believe that death has really overtaken them at last, and they fight desperately against the growing conviction that it must indeed be so.

They need reassuring and soothing first of all, though later there must come the gentle but firm explanation that real happiness under these new conditions cannot be attained without an entire reversal of currents of thought and objects of life. Such a process is for them slow and toilsome, and they not infrequently shrink altogether from undertaking it, and relapse into a discontented, effortless existence, such as that from which the doctor was rescued whose case was described in a previous chapter. Jealous and avaricious men also bind themselves to earth, and need help even more sadly, but they are usually so entirely unamenable to reason or common-sense that it is rarely possible to do much for them.

Others are detained in close touch with the affairs of earth for quite a different reason—not because of any special attraction for them, but from a sense of responsibility for some duty left undone or some debt unpaid. Quite a number of persons seem to draw up their wills unjustly, and when the opportunities for closer examination which are given by the astral life show them that they have mistaken, their regret often causes them to waste much time in unavailing efforts to counteract the effect of what they have done. Again, quite a number appear to have secrets of some sort in their lives—usually discreditable ones;

and if they die without imparting these to some one they are often much troubled by the burden on their conscience, though it may have pressed lightly enough during earth-life. Sometimes important papers are missing, and no one but the dead man knows where they are to be found; sometimes badly-needed money is concealed in an unknown place, and the man yearns to reveal it to those who should inherit it. In some of these cases special circumstances make it possible for the helper to intervene in some way upon the physical plane, and so to some extent satisfy and liberate the dead man; but in the majority the best that can be done is to explain that now the opportunity has been lost it is useless to grieve over it, and to try to persuade the man to abandon his thoughts of earth, and endeavour to make the best of the new life.

A sadder case is that of one who has died in anger with another. In some cases such a person will realize that he has been wrong, and will be filled with sorrow for his previous feelings or actions, and very desirous to make such reparation as may be possible. In other cases, unfortunately, feelings of hatred and revenge persist even beyond the grave, and the dead man is anxious to remain near the earth, not to help but to injure, as we have seen from some of the examples previously given.

Other strong feelings besides hatred may sometimes extend through the gates of death. I remember one case of a poor woman who met her death in a fire on board a steamboat. She had been unable to escape from the cabin, and had been very greatly terrified, though in reality she suffered no physical pain, since she died from suffocation long before any flame approached her. She was found some hours after death still in the same

condition of terror, not realizing that she had died, but imagining herself still to be in the burning cabin. Such a case is practically one of hysteria, and is naturally rare; but among the uninstructed fear and nervousness are unfortunately far too common, so that to soothe, to reassure, and to explain are ever the keynotes of the work of the helpers.

*Unselfish Lingerers.*

There are souls who voluntarily prolong their stay amongst lower astral conditions and in the closest possible touch with the earth-life, not from the love of it nor from any selfish consideration, but entirely for the sake of others. The husband whose case was described in chapter vi. was an instance of this; and a still more striking one is that of a certain noted personage who not infrequently takes charge of spiritualistic circles. His story is that his earth-life was one sadly stained with violence and crime, and that it was only after death that he realized the heinousness of his actions, and, full of compunction, set himself to see what good he could do in order to atone for so much that was evil. It occurred to him, or perhaps it was suggested to him by some more advanced worker, that since his earth-life had been such as to condemn him to a very prolonged sojourn on the lower levels of the astral plane, he might utilize those very conditions for the helping of others, and so transmute his own curse into a blessing for them. He therefore devoted himself with unwearied patience and unintermittent labour to endeavouring to prove to mankind the certainty and reality of the life after death; and he has undoubtedly succeeded in bringing this conviction to hundreds of sorrowing hearts.

*The Duty of Helping.*

Enough has been said to show what urgent need there is for the work of the helpers; alike during sleep and after death we cannot do better than dedicate our lives as fully as possible to this merciful and charitable occupation. There is room and work for all; everyone who can think can help, as I have fully explained in the book especially devoted to the subject. Not only should we each, as far as we may, take part in the work of the helpers, but we should further do all that we can to help to remove difficulties from their way. Naturally the worst of such difficulties are those which are caused by the attitude of the dead—by such selfishness and such clinging to earth-life as I have described above. But all of this is the direct consequence of ignorance during the earth-life; and so the best way to deal with it is to try as far as possible to lose no opportunity of spreading Theosophical teaching.

Another great obstacle in the path of those who are trying to aid the dead is the awful and foolish belief upon religious subjects under which so many of them suffer; while another great source of unnecessary trouble is the selfish and uncontrolled grief of the survivors. But for every one of these cases the cure is the same; knowledge gained upon all these subjects will save alike the living from sorrow and the dead from despair, so that for us who know these truths it is in truth a sacred duty that we should try to spread them. This is a duty, however, which needs to be done with the greatest tact. It would never be desirable or useful that we should at all times and seasons be thrusting Theosophy upon unwilling ears. Such a proceeding would

tend rather to disgust than to interest our auditors, as we may know from our own instinctive feeling when some well-meaning but intrusive stranger comes up and enquires whether our souls are saved. But it is certainly the duty of every one to whom this great light comes to qualify himself as a channel through which it may flow to others.

He must so thoroughly study it as to be ready to explain the truth upon all these subjects when need arises; he must be prepared to answer any intelligent question which may be asked with regard to its philosophy. It will probably happen that sooner or later some one who has just "lost" a friend or a relation will come to him for comfort and instruction; it is his part to see that he is able to answer their questions fully and satisfactorily, and to take advantage of this opportunity to draw them so far as may be into the right attitude towards death and the life beyond. In this way, by decreasing their grief and increasing their knowledge, he will prevent them from hindering the work of the helpers with those who have already passed over, and he will also prepare them to understand and to view rightly the death which must some day come to them. We have a very real gospel in Theosophy—a message of good news to all, a message that there is no death, a gospel through which in very truth life and immortality are brought to light; and it is alike our duty and pleasure and our privilege gladly to share this gospel with all who are ready to receive it.

#### *Larger Possibilities.*

It will be seen that although this life after death is so largely conditioned by the earth-life which precedes it, it would yet be a great mistake to regard it only as



a life of results. It may indeed be largely that to the man who blindly accepts the rearrangement and his surroundings generally; it is far otherwise with one who understands something of the plane and of its opportunities. Clearly there is a possibility of doing either much good or much evil. There is very much to be learned in many directions, as well as an infinity of active work for those who are willing to do it. Naturally the ordinary man does not do it; his thought has been chiefly self-centred during earth-life, and the tendency is that it should remain so still. Sometimes, however, he does gradually begin to see matters in the new light, to realize that hitherto he has been wasting his time; and in that case he probably makes an honest effort to improve what is left of it. There are cases in which death has been the means of a very happy change in the man's whole attitude; occasionally a bad man has been quite rapidly reformed, a man of ordinary life aroused to higher and wider possibilities, and a good man made very much better and more useful than he has ever been before.

#### *A Delightful Case.*

A case which will illustrate this was that of two young ladies who died very suddenly at the ages of eighteen and sixteen respectively. They had been very good girls during earth-life in the ordinary sense of the word—kindly, affectionate and well-intentioned, but fond of admiration and of finery, as young girls are, and looking forward with vivid interest to the life which seemed to be opening so pleasantly before them. The very sudden death was somewhat confusing to them, and at first they had a little difficulty in adapting themselves to their new sur-

roundings; but, coming in contact with the band of invisible helpers, they were at once fired with enthusiasm for their work, and threw themselves into it in the most whole-hearted manner. Dying thus in the full flush of youth, they have naturally a considerable term of astral life before them; and they are certainly spending it to the best possible advantage.

Many friends who did not fully understand probably pitied them profoundly for passing away so young, and thus, as they would say, losing the bright life that might have been theirs; while the truth is that nothing more advantageous could have occurred to them, because in this new and higher life they are doing more work in one year than could be crowded into twenty years of physical life, and are producing far more magnificent and extended results than any earth-life could by any possibility have produced. On earth their time must of necessity have been divided; no doubt they would have learned to devote some part of it to good and helpful work, yet much must inevitably have been frittered away in the trivialities which make up so much of this lower existence. Now no single moment is wasted, and without the possibility of fatigue or of pain they move triumphantly on the road of progress, just because they never think for an instant of themselves, but only of the hundreds to whom they can bring help and comfort.

So we see that this astral life is indeed a life of progress, as indeed we might have known that it would be, since progress is the rule of the divine scheme. Here as elsewhere advancement is possible to us just in proportion to our development. The man who is a slave to desire can only progress by wearing out his desires; still, that is the best that is possible at his stage. But

the man who is kindly and helpful learns much in many ways through the work which he is able to do in this astral life, and will return to earth with many additional powers and qualities because of the practice which he has had in unselfish effort.

*The Meeting of Friends.*

One of the questions which many are always asking with regard to this life beyond the grave is, "Shall we meet and recognize our friends?" Certainly we shall, for neither they nor we shall be changed; why, then, should we not recognize them? The affection is still there, and will act as a magnet to draw together those who feel it, far more readily and more surely there than here. True, if the loved one has left this earth very long ago, he may have already passed beyond the astral plane and entered the heaven life; in that case we must wait until we also reach that level before we can rejoin him, but when that is gained we shall possess our friend more perfectly than in this prison-house we can ever realize. But of this be sure, that those whom we have loved are not lost.

If we accustom ourselves to regard our death simply as the opening into a wider and fuller life, it is obvious that the death of a friend will also assume to us a very different complexion. We shall no longer feel it as separation to the same extent or in the same way, for, first of all, we know that separation is impossible between the souls of men, and it is the soul of our friend that we love, not the mere outer vehicle—the man himself and not his garment. Then we shall also perceive that even when we descend to a much lower plane of thought, there has still been no separation. Our friend is with us still, even as far as mere physical space is con-

cerned—here on earth, not far away in some vague heaven beyond the stars, but close to us, able still to feel and respond to our affection; able even in many cases to follow our every passing emotion, and to see quite clearly most of our thought. Every night we are with him during our hours of sleep; if we die soon after him, we shall find him at once on the astral plane; if we survive him for many years, we shall find him in the heaven-life; but in any case the reunion is sure where the affection exists. For love is one of the mightiest powers of the universe, whether it be in life or death.

It is indeed well worth our while to study this subject thoroughly, for the knowledge of the truth takes away all fear of death, and makes life easier to live because we understand its object and end. Death brings no suffering, but only joy, for those who live the true, the unselfish life. The old Latin saying is literally accurate—*mors janua vitæ*, death is the gate of life; that is exactly what it is, a gate into a fuller and higher life. On the other side of the grave, as well as on this, prevails the same law of divine justice, and we can trust as implicitly there as here to the action of that law with regard both to ourselves and to those we love. When once we realize the endless life, the misconceptions fall away, and we begin to see everything in its true proportions; death is to us no longer the dread king of terrors, but the bright angel of evolution, for we know that

'Tis but as when one layeth his worn-out robes away,  
And, taking new ones, sayeth, "These will I wear to-day!"  
So putteth by the spirit lightly its garb of flesh,  
And passeth to inherit a residence afresh.

—*The Song Celestial*, by Sir Edwin Arnold.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ASTRAL VISITS.

Now that, mainly through the influence of the Theosophical Society and the Society for Psychical Research, the subject of ghostly apparitions has been lifted out of the domain of ignorant ridicule into that of respectful examination and scientific investigation, it will perhaps assist us in our endeavour to comprehend other-world conditions if we make an attempt to classify and arrange these phenomena. There is an immense mass of evidence of occurrences of this nature, some of it no doubt unreliable by reason of the agitation or terror of the witnesses, but much of it bearing every appearance of absolute trustworthiness; yet little effort seems hitherto to have been made to reduce this chaos to order, or to evolve from its many indications a coherent theory.

Now that Theosophy has familiarized us with the idea that it is possible for man while still attached to a physical body to enter upon and examine the realms of the unseen, this task is clearly a much more hopeful one than it might have appeared before. We will therefore proceed to quote some of the recorded cases of apparitions, in order to illustrate what has been already said as to conditions beyond the grave, and to show how readily they are explicable in the light of the knowledge of that world which Theosophy gives us. Indeed, it has always seemed to me that from analysis and careful comparison of such narratives, much of what we now know by other means might have been

inferred. Any one who has been so fortunate as to study either Hinduism or Buddhism can hardly fail to see how much more readily these observed facts fit in with their teachings than with the mistaken theories as to immediate *post-mortem* conditions promulgated by modern theology. These narratives are chiefly selected from well-known collections of such stories, and reference to the books from which they are taken will usually show upon what testimony the author in each case accepted them. For most of them the evidence is clear and unimpeachable; in a few cases it would seem that sufficient trouble was not taken at the time to examine the witnesses with regard to details, and thus attestations which would have been very valuable are now unobtainable.

The student of occultism, however, very soon learns to disentangle truth from exaggeration in such accounts, and to distinguish fact from fiction by internal evidence. Such ghost-stories as are sometimes written by popular authors for widely circulated magazines often disgust the student by their crudity and utter incredibility; it seems a pity that the authors do not take the trouble to familiarize themselves with the rationale of the subject before writing, and so learn what is possible and what is impossible. Often with a little knowledge of the facts they might make their stories much more effective and gruesome by adding to them the *vraisemblance* which at present they so woefully lack.

Even if inaccuracies should have crept into some of the narratives quoted here, that would in no way affect my general argument; even if on further examination some story should prove unverifiable, at any rate it might have been true, since scores of others just

like it are known to be so. Our principles are so entirely based upon reason, and we have verified them by such numerous observations, that the accuracy or inaccuracy of an individual illustration could not affect them in the least. I ought, perhaps, to add that in many cases I have considerably abbreviated the stories, to avoid wasting the reader's time with details which are unnecessary as regards the main point with which we are at the moment occupied, and indeed sometimes tend rather to obscure it.

Our difficulty will not be in the least in finding cases to illustrate what has been said; it lies rather in the *embarras de richesse*—in the abundance and complexity of the phenomena that lie before us for examination. Truly, as Professor Sidgwick remarked at the founding of the Society for Psychical Research, it was indeed a scandal that facts of such importance and such frequency should have gone so long without careful investigation. The possibilities of this higher life are so many and so varied that classification is not an easy task. A few broad types reproduce themselves with considerable regularity, yet every case has its own peculiarities, and exceptions which will not fit comfortably into any of our niches are continually appearing.

The observers in such cases as we are examining are not infrequently flurried, and are almost certain to be thinking more about the personal than the scientific aspect of the apparition, so that particulars which would be of importance for our purposes are allowed to pass unnoticed. Very few people know what to observe, unless they have made a special study of this class of phenomena, and the ghost comparatively rarely shows himself to the person who is most anxious to interview him. So it comes to pass that in many people's minds

all happenings connected with the other world are jumbled hopelessly together, and they make no effort to distinguish between the real apparition and the double, the thought-form and the astral impression.

On all these points in turn we shall have something to say; but we will commence with those cases among the living which show the separability of the soul from the body. After considering a few instances of this temporary division between the man and his vehicle, we shall understand more easily how natural a process is the permanent casting aside of the particular physical body which he happens to be wearing in this incarnation. A good example to begin with is furnished to us by the well-known medium, Madame d'Espérance, who, in her very interesting autobiography, *Shadowland* (p. 355), thus describes her own sensations on the first occasion when she consciously left her body:

*The First Glimpse of a Higher Life.*

"It was a Sunday morning, a bright summer day. I had thrown myself on my sofa with a book, but my mind was occupied with projects as to the practical carrying out of tests, so that I did not pay much attention to its pages. I felt a curiously faint sinking sensation, and the printed pages I had been trying to study became strangely indistinct. Was I going to faint? Everything became dark and I felt sure I was going to be ill again. I would call some one, but I remembered that there was no one on that side of the house. The faintness passed away almost immediately, and I was glad I had not disturbed any one. I glanced at my book; strange how far away and dim it seemed! I had moved away from the sofa, but somebody else was there, and held the book; who could it be? How won-



derfully light and strong I felt! The faintness had gone, and in its place had come a marvellous sense of health, strength and power which I had never before known.

"Life was waking up within me, springing, bubbling, coursing through my veins like electric streams. Every part of my body was glowing with new vigour and a sense of absolute untrammelled freedom. For the first time I knew what it was to live.

"How strange the room looked, so small, so cramped, so dark, and that dim figure on the sofa—who was she? I seemed to recognize something in the quiet form, some faint recollection of having known her, but this irresistible sense of freedom must be indulged. I could not stay in this place, but where should I go? I moved towards the window. Strange how curiously dim my surroundings seemed! The walls appeared to approach me, to disappear; but whither, I could not tell."

I can myself bear testimony to the wonderful sense of perfect well-being, of freedom, lightness and strength which comes over a man immediately on leaving even a healthy physical body; and for one whose physical vehicle is weak and ailing the contrast must be far greater. Even when this experience has become an every-day matter, it still remains an ever-new marvel and delight to leap out of prison into the sunshine, out of weakness and limitation into the power and efficiency of that higher life.

*An Astral Visit.*

Mr. R. D. Owen, in *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World* (p. 256), gives us a very good example of an astral visit, for he obtains his information from the persons concerned at each end of the line, noting

down the visitor's recollection of her experiences, and then verifying it by the account of the lady who was visited. The astral traveller must have taken with her some of the etheric matter from her physical body, for she was able to look down upon the denser portion thereof as it lay beside her husband, and to compare its paler appearance with his. She seems at first to have supposed herself to be dead, and indeed was certain of the contrary only when she awoke the next morning. After examining her body she drifted through the wall, to her own great surprise, and presently found herself in the bed-chamber of her friend some distance away. There she had a conversation, which the friend was able to remember; though the visitor soon after lost consciousness, or at any rate recollection, and did not know how or when she returned to her physical frame.

In the cases above cited there seems no particular reason for the direction taken in the astral wanderings; but it often happens that the promenade is not an aimless one, but has an object that we are able to trace.

### *The Poppies.*

A young friend of mine sends me in a recent letter the following little narrative: "Father and mother had gone away from home for a week. One day my younger sister, G., was not very well, and during the following night she woke shivering, and found the bed-clothes neatly folded back, not at all as they had been when she went to sleep. This happened three nights in succession; and when she awoke on the third night she saw mother sitting at the foot of the bed, and then saw her rise and go out of the room. That night there had been a heavy storm which had beaten flat some poppies which father had sown with a profuse hand in

the front garden. When mother returned, we learnt that she had dreamt for three successive nights that she had pulled back G.'s bed-clothes, and on the third of the nights she remembered passing down stairs, and thinking as she passed through the front garden, 'What a pity that all those poppies have been so beaten down!' She also noticed that the front door seemed to open the reverse way."

Here it is obvious that maternal affection was the directing agency. The absent mother felt intuitively that her child was not quite well, and hovered round her protectingly, though it is not easy to divine the exact reason for the action of turning back the bed-clothes. On the third night she must have been slightly materialized, or must have taken with her some etheric matter, for she was plainly visible to the child. Her notice of the trifling fact about the flowers is a little touch which helps to make it clear that this was an astral visit, and not merely an instance of clairvoyance; and even the passing remark about the front door is not without its interest, for it is an example of the confusion which so frequently occurs in the earlier experiences of the seer, before he is accustomed to the astral vision which sees from both sides at once, as it were, and so often causes an apparent reversal.

In all these cases the ladies concerned must have had their psychic faculties fairly near the surface, as they were aroused into action without special stimulus. In many people they are still buried too deeply to be easily reached, yet under the stress of some great danger or some sore need they may be awakened into active service.

*Seeking Help in Trance.*

A remarkable and well-attested case of this sort is that of two Oxford clergymen, denoted in Dr. Lee's *Sights and Shadows* (p. 88) by the initials W. and P. The former of these was a Fellow of his college, while the latter held a living eighteen miles away. W. had one night a vivid and most distressing dream, which was twice repeated, that his friend P. appeared before him in a condition of deep fear, exclaiming that he was being buried. The next morning after breakfast, while sitting in his armchair, he heard a tap at his door. Calling out "Come in!" he heard the door open, and some one enter. Supposing it to be the servant, he did not look up until a startling whisper struck his ear, in his friend P.'s familiar voice, "W., they are burying me!" Starting up, he found no one in the room, nor had any of the servants been there. He started off without delay to see his friend, and on reaching his rectory found a hearse drawn up before the door, and P.'s body already screwed up in a coffin, and just about to be removed for interment. He insisted on having it reopened, and peremptorily forbade that the funeral should take place. He had the body placed in a bed, and employed warm applications; eventually signs of returning life became manifest, and after a few days P. recovered, and lived for nine years afterwards.

It will be noted that the unfortunate man was at first able to reach his friend only when the latter was asleep—that is to say, when his astral body was for the moment freed from the obscuration of the physical; but since he found that insufficient, the imminence of the peril urged him into still greater efforts, which resulted in a partial materialization, so that he was enabled to produce physical sounds, and thus succeed in

compelling his friend's attention to his sad plight. Very many stories of this type might be given, but perhaps the best of them all is the account of the rescue of the passengers from a wrecked vessel, given by Mr. Robert Dale Owen in his *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World* (p. 242). It is well known, but I quote it in full, for it is a singularly perfect specimen of its kind, and though every detail in it could be paralleled from other narratives, I know no other which contains them all so dramatically combined. It runs as follows:

*"Steer to the Nor'west."*

Mr. Robert Bruce was first mate on a barque trading between Liverpool and St. John's, New Brunswick. On one of her voyages, bound westwards, being then some five or six weeks out, and having neared the eastern portion of the Banks of Newfoundland, the captain and mate had been on deck at noon, taking an observation of the sun; after which they both descended to calculate their day's work.

The cabin, a small one, was immediately at the stern of the vessel, and the short stairway, descending to it, ran athwartships. Immediately opposite to this stairway, just beyond a small square landing, was the mate's stateroom; and from that landing there were two doors, close to each other, the one opening aft into the cabin—the other, fronting the stairway, into the stateroom. The desk in the stateroom was in the forward part of it, close to the door; so that any one sitting at it and looking over his shoulder could see into the cabin.

The mate, absorbed in his calculation, which did not result as he expected, varying considerably from the dead-reckoning, had not noticed the captain's motions.

When he had completed his calculations, he called out, without looking round, "I make our latitude and longitude so and so. Can that be right? How is yours, sir?"

Receiving no reply, he repeated his question, glancing over his shoulder and perceiving, as he thought, the captain busy writing on his slate. Still no answer. Thereupon he rose; and, as he fronted the cabin door, the figure he had mistaken for the captain raised its head, and disclosed to the astonished mate the features of an entire stranger.

Bruce was no coward; but, as he met that fixed gaze looking directly at him in grave silence, and became assured that it was no one whom he had ever seen before, it was too much for him; and instead of stopping to question the seeming intruder, he rushed upon the deck in such evident alarm that it instantly attracted the captain's attention. "Why, Mr. Bruce," said the latter, "what in the world is the matter with you?"

"The matter, sir? Who is that at your desk?"

"No one that I know of."

"But there *is*, sir; there's a stranger there."

"A stranger! Why, man, you must be dreaming. You must have seen the steward there, or the second mate. Who else would venture down without orders?"

"But, sir, he was sitting in your armchair, fronting the door, writing on your slate. Then he looked up full in my face; and, if ever I saw a man plainly and distinctly in this world, I saw him."

"Him! Whom?"

"God knows, sir; I don't. I saw a man, and a man I had never seen in my life before."

"You must be going crazy, Mr. Bruce. A stranger, and we nearly six weeks out!"

"I know, sir; but then I saw him."

"Go down, and see who it is."

Bruce hesitated. "I never was a believer in ghosts," he said, "but, if the truth must be told, sir, I'd rather not face it alone."

"Come, come, man. Go down at once, and don't make a fool of yourself before the crew."

"I hope you have always found me willing to do what's reasonable," Bruce replied, changing colour, "but if it's all the same to you, sir, I'd rather we should both go down together."

The captain descended the stairs, and the mate followed him. Nobody in the cabin! They examined the staterooms. Not a soul to be found!

"Well, Mr. Bruce," said the captain, "did I not tell you you had been dreaming?"

"It's all very well to say so, sir; but if I didn't see that man writing on your slate, may I never see my home and family again!"

"Ah! writing on the slate! Then it should be there still." And the captain took it up.

"Here's something, sure enough!" he exclaimed. "Is that your writing, Mr. Bruce?"

The mate took the slate; and there in plain, legible characters, stood the words, "Steer to the Nor'West."

"Have you been trifling with me, sir?" added the captain in a stern manner.

"On my word as a man and as a sailor, sir," replied Bruce, "I know no more of this matter than you do. I have told you the exact truth."

The captain sat down at his desk, the slate before him, in deep thought. At last turning the slate over and pushing it towards Bruce, he said, "Write down, 'Steer to the nor'west.'"

The mate complied; and the captain, after narrowly comparing the two handwritings, said, "Mr. Bruce, go and tell the second mate to come down here."

He came; and at the captain's request, he also wrote the same words. So did the steward. So, in succession, did every man of the crew who could write at all. But no one of the various hands resembled, in any degree, the mysterious writing.

When the crew retired the captain sat deep in thought. "Could any one have been stowed away?" at last he said. "The ship must be searched; and if I don't find the fellow he must be a good hand at hide-and-seek. Order up all hands."

Every nook and corner of the vessel, from stem to stern, was thoroughly searched, and that with all the eagerness of excited curiosity—for the report had gone out that a stranger had shown himself on board; but not a living soul beyond the crew and the officers was found.

Returning to the cabin after their fruitless search, "Mr. Bruce," said the captain, "what do you make of all this?"

"Can't tell, sir. *I* saw the man write; *you* see the writing. There must be something in it."

"Well, it would seem so. We have the wind free, and I have a great mind to keep her away and see what will come of it."

"I surely would, sir, if I were in your place. It's only a few hours lost, at the worst."

"Well, we'll see. Go on deck and give the course nor'west. And, Mr. Bruce," he added, as the mate rose to go, "have a look-out aloft, and let it be a hand you can depend upon."

His orders were obeyed. About three o'clock the



look-out reported an iceberg nearly ahead, and, shortly after, what he thought was a vessel of some kind close to it.

As they approached, the captain's glass disclosed the fact that it was a dismantled ship, apparently frozen to the ice, and with a good many human beings on it. Shortly after, they hove to, and sent out the boats to the relief of the sufferers.

It proved to be a vessel from Quebec, bound to Liverpool, with passengers on board. She had got entangled in the ice, and finally frozen fast, and had passed several weeks in a most critical situation. She was stove, her decks swept—in fact, a mere wreck, all her provisions and almost all her water gone. Her crew and passengers had lost all hopes of being saved, and their gratitude for the unexpected rescue was proportionately great.

As one of the men who had been brought away in the third boat that had reached the wreck was ascending the ship's side, the mate, catching a glimpse of his face, started back in consternation. It was the very face he had seen three or four hours before, looking up at him from the captain's desk.

At first he tried to persuade himself it might be fancy; but the more he examined the man the more sure he became that he was right. Not only the face but the person and the dress exactly corresponded.

As soon as the exhausted crew and famished passengers were cared for, and the barque on her course again, the mate called the captain aside. "It seems that was not a ghost I saw to-day, sir; the man's alive."

"What do you mean? Who's alive?"

"Why, sir, one of the passengers we have just saved

is the same man I saw writing on your slate at noon. I would swear to it in a court of justice."

"Upon my word, Mr. Bruce," replied the captain, "this gets more and more singular. Let us go and see this man."

They found him in conversation with the captain of the rescued ship. They both came forward, and expressed in the warmest terms their gratitude for deliverance from a horrible fate—slow-coming death by exposure and starvation.

The captain replied that he had but done what he was certain they would have done for him under the same circumstances, and asked them both to step down into the cabin. Then, turning to the passenger, he said: "I hope, sir, you will not think I am trifling with you; but I would be obliged to you if you would write a few words on this slate." And he handed him the slate with that side up on which the mysterious writing was not. "I will do anything you ask," replied the passenger, "but what shall I write?"

"A few words are all I want. Suppose you write 'Steer to the nor'west.'"

The passenger, evidently puzzled to make out the motive for such a request, complied, however, with a smile. The captain took up the slate and examined it closely; then stepping aside, so as to conceal the slate from the passenger, he turned it over, and gave it to him again with the other side up.

"You say that is your handwriting?" said he.

"I need not say so," rejoined the other, looking at it, "for you saw me write it."

"And this?" said the captain, turning the slate over.

The man looked first at one writing, then at the other, quite confounded. At last, "what is the mean-

ing of this?" said he. "I wrote only one of these. Who wrote the other?"

"That's more than I can tell you, sir. My mate here says you wrote it, sitting at this desk, at noon to-day."

The captain of the wreck and the passenger looked at each other, exchanging glances of intelligence and surprise; and the former asked the latter, "Did you dream that you wrote on this slate?"

"No, sir, not that I remember."

"You speak of dreaming," said the captain of the barque. "What was this gentleman about at noon to-day?"

"Captain," replied the other, "the whole thing is most mysterious and extraordinary; and I had intended to speak to you about it as soon as we got a little quiet. This gentleman (pointing to the passenger), being much exhausted, fell into a heavy sleep, or what seemed such, some time before noon. After an hour or more, he awoke, and said to me, 'Captain, we shall be relieved this very day.' When I asked him what reason he had for saying so, he replied that he had dreamed that he was on board a barque, and that she was coming to our rescue. He described her appearance and rig; and, to our utter astonishment, when your vessel hove in sight she corresponded exactly to his description of her.

"There is no doubt," rejoined the other captain, "that the writing on the slate, let it have come there as it may, saved all your lives. I was steering at the time considerably south of west, and I altered my course to nor'west, and had a look-out aloft, to see what would come of it. But you say," he added, turning to the passenger, "that you did not dream of writing on a slate?"

"No, sir. I have no recollection whatever of doing so. I got the impression that the barque I saw in my dream was coming to rescue us; but *how* that impression came I cannot tell. There is another very strange thing about it," he added. "Everything here on board seems to me quite familiar; yet I am very sure I never was in your vessel before. It is all a puzzle to me. What did your mate see?"

Thereupon Mr. Bruce related to them all the circumstances above detailed. The conclusion they finally arrived at was that it was a special interposition of providence to save them from what seemed a hopeless fate.

The above narrative was communicated to me by Captain J. S. Clarke, of the schooner *Julia Hallock*, who had it directly from Mr. Bruce himself. I asked Captain Clarke if he knew Bruce well, and what sort of a man he was.

"As truthful and straightforward a man," he replied, "as ever I met in all my life. We were as intimate as brothers; and two men can't be together, shut up for seventeen months in the same ship, without getting to know whether they can trust one another's word or not. He always spoke of the circumstance in terms of reverence, as of an incident that seemed to bring him nearer to God and to another world. I'd stake my life upon it that he told me no lie."

A capital story, typical and dramatically complete, as we have said. Yet it by no means stands alone. In *The Theosophical Review*, vol. xxii, p. 274, we find Mrs. Besant writing thus: "In one of my many voyages I travelled with a captain who told me some of his own experiences, and among these he related one about a man in a dripping waterproof who had come to him in his cabin, and had begged him to steer in a particular

direction so as to save some castaways. The captain did so, and found a party of shipwrecked sailors, one of whom he recognized as his visitor." Then she proceeds to quote from "one of our daily papers" a tale very closely resembling that of Mr. Robert Bruce. It is alleged to have occurred to Captain Benner, of the brig *Mohawk*, a small vessel engaged in the West Indian trade.

*The Brig Mohawk.*

The captain, it is stated, was aroused one night by a man in a green sou'wester, who told him to change his course to the south-west. Supposing that his mate had sent some one to call him, he rushed on deck, but the mate denied having sent for him. On his return to the cabin the same thing occurred, and again he fruitlessly visited the deck. But when the mysterious man appeared for the third time, using the same words, with an added warning that it would soon be too late if he did not attend to it, he yielded and gave orders for the change of course. In due course a ship's boat was sighted, containing four men, one of whom wore a green sou'wester. That man had dreamed the night before that he had come three times into the cabin of this brig, and had implored the captain to change his course so as to find and save the boat and its occupants. We know nothing of the source of this story, but "si non é vero, é ben trovato."

It will be observed that in all these later cases not only was there an urgent need to compel the soul to leave the body, and pay its astral visit, but also the surrounding circumstances were such as to facilitate the attempt. In the case of the clergyman P., the trance of the physical body was perfect, while in all the sea stories

there is the strong probability that the shipwrecked men were in an unusually enfeebled condition from exposure and want of food. Enforced fasting of this kind may reasonably be supposed to produce some of the effects which have been found to attend upon voluntary fasting in the case of various saints and ecstasies. The astral body may certainly be more readily freed under such conditions, though it is by no means the best way of attaining that result; and no doubt the successful achievements above described were in part due to the favourable circumstances under which they took place.

## CHAPTER XII.

### VISITS JUST BEFORE DEATH.

We find a very large number of instances in which these astral visits have been paid when the visitor was just at the point of death—the time when the physical body is naturally at its weakest, and its hold upon the astral particles is consequently very slight. At such a moment the strong desire in this direction seems very readily to bring about its own fulfilment; indeed, it is quite certain to do so either just before or just after the final departure from the body. If the physical conditions should be such as to prevent the man from leaving his body until he does so finally, then as soon as he is free he carries out the wish upon which his mind is fixed; but in that case he is a genuine apparition, and so comes under the head to be treated in our next chapter. Still, there are very many instances in which it can be clearly proved that such a visit took place some time before the actual moment of death, and those properly belong to our present division of the subject. Such is the well-known case of Mary Goffe, of Rochester, which I quote in my book on *Clairvoyance*, of which Mr. Andrew Lang remarks: “Not many stories have such good evidence in their favour.” I will not repeat that narrative here, but will instead give one very similar to it, possessing the same characteristics of abundant verification at both ends of the line. It is quoted from Dr. F. G. Lee’s *Glimpses of the Supernatural*, vol. ii, p. 64.

*From Egypt to Torquay.*

"A lady and her husband (who held a position of some distinction in India) were returning home (A. D. 1854), after an absence of four years, to join a family of young children, when the former was seized in Egypt with an illness of a most alarming character, and grew so weak that little or no hope of her recovery existed. The only point which seemed to disturb her mind, after the delirium of fever had passed away, was a deep-seated desire to see her absent children once again, which she frequently expressed to those who attended upon her. Day after day, for more than a week, she gave utterance to her longings and prayers, remarking that she would die happily if only this one wish could be gratified.

"On the morning of the day of her departure she fell into a long and heavy sleep, from which her attendants found it difficult to arouse her. During the whole period of it she lay perfectly tranquil. Soon after noon, however, she suddenly awoke, exclaiming, 'I have seen them all! I have seen them! God be praised!' and then slept again till towards evening, when she died.

"The children of the dying lady were being educated at Torquay under the supervision of a friend of the family. Two apartments on one floor, perfectly distinct, were occupied by them as play and recreation rooms. All were there gathered together. No one of the children was absent. They were amusing themselves with games of chance, books and toys, in company of a nursemaid who had never seen their parents. All of a sudden their mother, as she usually appeared, entered the larger room of the two, paused, looked for some moments at each and smiled, passed into the next room,



and then vanished away. Three of the elder children recognized her at once, but were greatly disturbed and impressed at her appearance, silence and manner. The younger and the nursemaid each and all saw a lady in white come into the smaller room, and then slowly glide by and fade away."

The date of this occurrence, September 10th, 1854, was carefully noted, and it was afterwards found that the two events above recorded happened almost contemporaneously. A record of the event was committed to paper, and transcribed on a fly-leaf of the family bible, from which the above account was taken.

In another book by the same author (*Glimpses in the Twilight*, p. 94) we read how a Quaker lady dying at Cockermouth is clearly seen and recognized in daylight by her three children at Settle, the remainder of the story being practically identical with the one given above. This story also seems to be very fully and definitely attested.

I will add here a rather striking instance of the same nature which was related to me many years ago, though I have no authority from the person principally concerned to give his name to the public. The experience occurred to him while still at college.

#### *A Thrice-Repeated Visit.*

It seems that one night he had retired to bed somewhat earlier than usual, having locked the outer door of his sitting-room, but leaving that between the latter apartment and his bed-room standing open. In the sitting-room a large fire was blazing brightly, flooding the place with its cheerful light, and rendering every object as distinctly visible as at noonday. It was half-past ten, and he had just laid himself down in blissful

expectation of a long and uninterrupted sleep, when, standing in the doorway between the two rooms, in the full glare of the light, he saw the figure of his father. Surprise held him motionless for a few seconds—nay, he thinks that he must have watched the play of the firelight upon that sad, earnest face for a whole minute—when the figure raised its hand and beckoned him to come. This dissolved the spell which seemed to hold him in its grasp, and he sprang from the bed and rushed towards the door; but before he could reach it the figure had vanished!

Startled beyond expression, he searched both sitting-room and bed-room thoroughly, but easily convinced himself that he was entirely alone; there was nowhere for an intruder to hide, and the outer door was securely locked as he had left it. Besides, the figure had been distinctly and unmistakably that of his father, looking—except for the intense yearning expressed in his face—exactly as when he had last seen him only a few weeks before; and he was quite convinced that no college joker could have deceived him on this point. He was at last forced to conclude that he must have been the victim of an illusion, hard though it was to bring himself to such an opinion when he recollected the natural appearance of the figure and the play of the firelight on its face; so he once again composed himself to rest.

The shock, however, had banished sleep for the time, and he lay watching the flickering shadows on the wall for more than an hour before he felt himself sinking again into unconsciousness. Whether he had actually fallen into a doze, or was only on the point of doing so, he was unable to say; but he was suddenly startled into complete wakefulness by the reappearance

of the figure in the doorway, with the same intense expression on its face, and beckoning to him, if possible, even more earnestly than before. Determined that this time, at least, it should not elude him, he sprang with one bound from his bed to the door, and clutched violently at the apparition; but he was again doomed to disappointment. The appearance seemed exactly the same even when he was within a yard of it, yet his outstretched hands grasped only the empty air, and once more the strictest search only confirmed what was already certain—that it was utterly impossible for any bodily presence either to have escaped from the rooms or concealed itself in them.

Like most young men, he had been more or less sceptical upon the subject of apparitions, and, though seriously startled by what he had seen, he endeavoured to reason himself into the belief that it was due to a mere trick of the imagination, arising perhaps from some unsuspected bodily ailment. After bathing his forehead with cold water, he therefore retired to rest once more, firmly resolving not to allow his mind to dwell upon what he considered the dream of a distempered brain. As he lay down, the various college clocks chimed midnight, and, with visions of early chapel in his mind, he made the most strenuous efforts to obtain the sleep of which he felt so much need.

At last he was successful, but it seemed to him that he could have been but a few moments unconscious when he awoke with a start, with that feeling of causeless terror at his heart which so often overcomes persons of highly nervous organization when suddenly roused from deep slumber. The fire in the sitting-room had burnt low, and instead of the cheerful dancing light he had seen as he fell asleep, there was now only a dull

red glow upon wall and ceiling; but there in the doorway, clearly defined in the midst of that glow, stood his father's figure once more! This time, however, there was a distinct difference in both its expression and its action; instead of the intense yearning which had been so clearly visible before, there was a look of deep though resigned regret, and the raised hand no longer eagerly beckoned him to approach, but slowly and sorrowfully waved him back as he fixed his horror-stricken gaze upon the vision. Instead, too, of vanishing instantly, as before, its outlines became indistinct and it seemed to fade gradually away into the dull red glow upon the wall.

Only upon its disappearance did our young friend recover the power of motion, and his first act was to draw forth his watch and look at the time. It was ten minutes to two—far too early either to arouse any one else or to obtain any sort of conveyance for his homeward journey—for home he at once resolved to go. His father—the rector of a distant country parish—had been perfectly well when he left him a few weeks before, nor had he since heard anything to alarm him in any way; but, profoundly impressed as he was by the recurrence of the vision, and convinced at last that there was in the matter something of what is usually called the supernatural, he felt that it would be impossible for him to rest until he had satisfied himself by ocular demonstration that his father was alive and well. He made no further attempt to sleep, and at the very earliest moment when he thought such an application possible, he sought an interview with the head of his college, explained his fears to him, and set out for home without delay.

The day of rapid travel somewhat weakened the

impression that the events of the night had produced upon him, and when, as the shades of evening were beginning to fall, he drove up the well-known lane leading to the rectory, it was scarcely more than a latent uneasiness which clouded his pleasant anticipations of the astonished greeting of the home circle. It gave him a sudden shock, on coming within sight of the house, to see that all the blinds were drawn closely down; true, it was already growing dusk, but he knew that his father loved the twilight hour, and would never admit candles until they were absolutely necessary; and a nervous apprehension of he hardly knew what, overpowered him so completely that for some moments he was unable to knock at the door. When at last he summoned courage to do so it was opened by the butler—one who had served in the family for many years—whom he had known since childhood; but the first glimpse of this old retainer's face revived in a moment all his worst apprehensions.

"Ah! sir," said the man, "you are too late! If you could only have come last night! Yes" (in answer to his horrified enquiries), "yes, the master is gone; and almost the only words he spoke after he was taken ill were to say how he longed to see you. It was ten o'clock last night when the fit took him, and half an hour afterwards, as soon as he was able to speak, the first thing he said was, 'Send for my son; I must see my son once more.' We told him that a messenger should be sent with the first dawn of the day, but he scarcely seemed to hear us, for he had fallen back into a kind of trance, like. Then at a quarter to twelve he roused up for a few moments, but all he said was, 'How I wish my son were here!' And then again just the moment before he died—ten minutes to two it was—

he opened his eyes and seemed to know us all, though he was too weak to say much; but he just whispered, 'I am going; I should like to have spoken to my dear son once more, but I shall not live to see him now.' And then he passed away so peacefully it seemed as though he had but fallen asleep."

Such was our friend's first experience of life on the super-physical plane—one of a class by no means uncommon, though perhaps an unusually perfect and striking example of its kind. At any rate, it is not difficult to believe the remark of the narrator, that it produced on him an impression which time was powerless to obliterate—an impression which coloured his whole after-life.

How many there are among us who have been profoundly affected—nay, whose entire characters even have been changed—by one short glimpse of that world which is ever close around us, though commonly veiled from our eyes! Few people care to speak of such things in this blind and sceptical age, but any one who takes the trouble to make quiet and earnest enquiries among his friends will be surprised to discover how much more common than he had supposed such experiences are.

Half a century ago, when scepticism was still more rabidly rampant than it is now, and when there was far less knowledge on such subjects than we possess to-day, Lord Lytton wrote in *A Strange Story*:

"Be my readers few or many, there will be no small proportion of them to whom, once at least in the course of their existence, a something strange and eerie has occurred—a something which has perplexed and baffled rational conjecture, and struck on those chords which vibrate to superstition. It may have been only a dream unaccountably verified—an undefinable pre-

sentiment or forewarning; but up from such slighter and vaguer tokens of the realm of marvel—up to the portents of ghostly apparitions or haunted chambers, I believe that the greater number of persons arrived at middle age, however instructed the class, however civilized the land, however sceptical the period to which they belong, have either in themselves experienced or heard recorded by intimate associates whose veracity they accept as indisputable in all ordinary transactions of life—phenomena which are not to be solved by the wit that mocks them, nor, perhaps, always and entirely, to the contentment of the reason or the philosophy that explains them away. Such phenomena, I say, are infinitely more numerous than would appear from the instances currently quoted and dismissed with a jest; for few of those who have witnessed them are disposed to own it, and they who only hear of them through others, however trustworthy, would not impugn their character for common-sense by professing a belief to which common-sense is a merciless persecutor. But he who reads my assertion in the quiet of his own room will perhaps pause, ransack his memory, and find there, in some dark corner which he excludes from ‘the babbling and remorseless day,’ a pale recollection that proves the assertion not untrue.”

In our day, mainly owing to the exertions of the Theosophical Society and the Society for Psychical Research, these subjects are regarded much more rationally than they were in Lord Lytton’s time, and we can speak more definitely and precisely about them; but what he has written above is just as true now as it was then.

In the cases already cited we can understand that the difficulties which for the normal man lie in the way

of a conscious astral journey were overcome by the motive power of a strong desire, founded upon an imperative need. There are, however, instances on record in which under favourable circumstances (such, for example, as a long period of unconsciousness preceding death) a simple wish connected with the ordinary and unimportant affairs of daily life may produce the same result.

*Double Demanding Photographs.*

A striking and unimpeachably authenticated instance of the manner in which a strong wish, even connected with the most trivial matters, may produce the apparition of the double when a man is very near death, and therefore his principles are readily separable, is given in *Real Ghost Stories* (p. 101). It occurred in January, 1891, and the apparition was seen in a shop in a broad, busy street in Newcastle, at eight o'clock in the morning. The shop was a photographer's, and the double walked in in the most matter-of-fact way, and asked for some photographs of himself which had been taken nearly a month previously. They were not ready, and he was asked to call again, but said he had been travelling all night and could not do so. No one at the time suspected that there was anything abnormal about his visit, but a week later his father called, and it was found that at the time when he had appeared at the shop, his body had been lying in bed at home, unconscious, that he never recovered consciousness, and died at 2:30 the same afternoon. Mr. Dickinson, the photographer who interviewed the double, had not seen him on his previous visit in the flesh to be photographed, but when he saw the portrait which had been taken on that occasion, he at once recognized it as that



of the person who had called on the morning in question. Mr. Stead remarks of this story: "We may turn it which way we will; there is no hypothesis which will fit the facts except the assumption that there is such a thing as a thought-body, capable of locomotion and speech, which can transfer itself wherever it pleases, clothing itself with whatever clothes it desires to wear, which are phantasmal like itself."

What Mr. Stead here calls a thought-body we should regard as far more probably the man himself employing his astral vehicle; but there are cases to which the term thought-body may very properly be applied—those which are called in Germany "*doppelgänger*," or apparitions of the double of a living man, he being usually entirely unconscious of what occurs. To them we will devote a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THOUGHT-BODIES.

All students of Theosophy are aware that thought takes form upon its own mental plane, and in the vast majority of cases upon the astral plane also. If a man thinks strongly of himself as present at any given place, or even if he has a very strong desire to be at that place, the form taken by that thought or desire will very often be that of the thinker himself, which will appear at the place in question. This is of course a phenomenon totally distinct from the appearance of the man in his astral body; for in this case the man himself is not present at all, but remains with his physical body, while the thought-form, when once thrown off, is practically unconnected with him and no longer under his control. A clairvoyant may learn to utilize such a form by means of sympathetic vibration as a kind of outpost of his own consciousness; but this would be entirely beyond the capacity of the average man. In many cases such a thought-form becomes visible to others, and is mistaken for the man himself; when this takes place the thought or desire must be sufficiently strong to do one of three things—either by mesmeric influence to call up the image of the thinker in the mind of the person to whom he wishes to appear; or by the same power to stimulate for the moment that person's psychic faculties so that he is able to see his astral visitor; or to produce a temporary materialization, which will be visible on the physical plane in the ordinary way. This last would seem to have been the method adopted in the following case:

*The Effect of Excitement.*

"Mr. Alexander Drummond was a painter, who had a big business and a large staff of men. His clerk was Walter Souter, his brother-in-law. His business was to be at the shop (in Northgate, Dundee) sharp at six o'clock in the morning, to take an account of where the men were going, quantity of material, etc. In this he was assisted by Miss Drummond. One morning he did not turn up at the hour, but at twenty minutes past six he came in at the door and appeared very much excited; but instead of stepping to the desk, where Mr. and Miss Drummond were awaiting him, he went right through the front shop and out at a side door; this in sight of Mr. and Miss D., and also in sight of a whole squad of workmen. Well, exactly in another twenty minutes he came in, also very much excited, and explained that it was twenty minutes past six when he wakened, and that he had run all the way from his house (he lived a mile from the place of business). He was a very exemplary, punctual man, and when Mr. Drummond asked him where he went to when he came first, he was dumbfounded and could not comprehend what was meant. To test his truthfulness, Mr. D. went out to his wife that afternoon, when she told him the same story: that it was twenty minutes past six o'clock when he woke, and that he was very much excited about it, as it was the first time he had slept in (i.e., overslept)."

This story is given by Mr. Stead in *Real Ghost Stories* (p. 41), and he mentions that it was told to him by a man who had been twenty-five years a police commissioner and five years a magistrate in the town of Dundee. Indeed, there can be no reason to doubt it,

since it is one of a very large class, and its only peculiarity is that there happened to be so large a body of witnesses. Mrs. Crowe in her *Night Side of Nature* gives quite a collection of examples of this kind, from which I select the following:

*Triplin's Double.*

"Stilling relates that a government officer of the name of Triplin, in Weimar, on going to his office to fetch a paper of importance, saw his own likeness sitting there, with the deed before him. Alarmed, he returned home, and desired his maid to go there and fetch the papers she would find on the table. The maid saw the same form, and imagined that her master had gone by another road, and got there before her; his mind seems to have preceded his body."

*The Sheriff's Secretary.*

"The Landrichter, or Sheriff F., in Frankfort, sent his secretary on an errand; presently afterwards the secretary reëntered the room and laid hold of a book. His master asked him what had brought him back, whereupon the figure vanished, and the book fell to the ground; it was a volume of Linnæus. In the evening, when the secretary returned, and was interrogated with regard to his expedition, he said he had fallen into an eager dispute with an acquaintance as he went along about some botanical question, and had ardently wished he had had his Linnæus with him to refer to." (P. 176.)

*Doubles Frequently Seen.*

"Edward Stern, author of some German works, had a friend who was frequently seen out of the body, as the Germans term it; and the father of that person was

so much the subject of this phenomenon that he was often observed to enter his house, whilst he was yet working in the fields. His wife used to say to him, 'Why, papa, you came home before;' and he would answer, 'I dare say; I was so anxious to get away earlier, but it was impossible.'

"The cook in a convent of nuns, at Ebersdorf, was frequently seen picking herbs in the garden, when she was in the kitchen and much in need of them" (p. 178).

*A Strange Story from Rome.*

"Some time ago the *Dublin University Magazine* related a case as having occurred at Rome, to the effect that a gentleman had, one night on going home to his lodging, thrown his servant into great amazement, the man exclaiming, 'Good Lord, sir; you came home before!' He declared that he had let his master into the house, attended him upstairs, and (I think) undressed him, and seen him get into bed. When they went to the room they found no clothes; but the bed appeared to have been lain in, and there was a strange mark upon the ceiling, as if from the passage of an electrical fluid. The only thing the young man could remember whereby to account for this extraordinary circumstance was, that whilst abroad and in company, he had been overcome with ennui, fallen into a deep reverie, and for a time forgotten that he was not at home" (p. 181).

This last is a very remarkable story, and one suspects exaggeration with regard to the undressing, and also as to the strange mark on the ceiling. All these are clearly instances of thought-forms, since in every one of them the man was awake in the physical body at the time of his appearance at a distance from that body.

*The Priest's Double.*

I myself once had a small experience of the same description, which is no doubt susceptible of a precisely similar explanation. It once happened to me during my occupancy of a country curacy to be very much weakened by an accident, and consequently to feel entirely unfit for a very heavy Sunday's work. I got through it somehow, though with extreme fatigue, and towards the end of the final service I have no doubt that I may have been thinking longingly of the possibility of rest when it was over, though I have no distinct recollection of any such thought. At any rate, when I at last wended my way to the vestry, I was much startled to find myself already installed there, and occupying the only chair which the little room possessed! The image was habited exactly as I was, in cassock, surplice and stole, all in perfect order; and there it sat looking calmly yet steadily at me. This was before my Theosophical days, so I was unprepared with any explanation for such a phenomenon, though I had heard that to see a wraith of oneself foretold death. But I was far too utterly wearied then to think or care about that; I simply walked straight up to the apparition, and sat down upon it, or rather upon its chair, without even offering it any apology. What became of it I know not, for when I rose from that chair some ten minutes later it was not to be seen. No results of any kind followed, and I have never seen a similar appearance since. I can conscientiously say that I believe my attention had never swerved from the service which I was conducting; yet I suppose that the strong desire for rest was present all the while at the back of my mind, and in this sub-conscious thought I must have pictured my-

self as sitting down and resting when the service was over. It is possible, too, that the weakened condition of my physical body may have allowed my inner senses to act more readily, and given me for the moment just sufficient clairvoyance to enable me to see a strong thought-form.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### APPARITIONS ANNOUNCING DEATH.

What I have written with regard to the astral visits just before death is equally true of the genuine apparition. While he has generally weighty and comprehensible reasons for the effort which he makes to show himself, there are also cases in which the cause which moves the dead man to take so much trouble seems to us wholly inadequate. I suppose this need excite no surprise in our minds, for the motives which govern the majority of men in the majority of their actions during earth-life seem quite ridiculously inadequate to any serious mind. Merely to gratify some fleeting passion or the whim of a moment, to gain a little money or to surpass somebody else, or even with the still more incomprehensible object of annoying some one else or revenging himself upon him, the average man will spend an amount of time and energy which, if directed into a rational channel, would not only be of great benefit to many of his fellow men, but would also considerably advance his own upward progress. It is very difficult to understand how any grown man can be so utterly silly, and we might well refuse to believe that it was possible if it were not that examples force themselves daily upon our notice.

So, after all, we cannot wonder that those who have behaved irrationally during earth-life should continue to do so after death, since we know that the mere casting aside of the physical vestment in no way changes the disposition of the man. The great majority of



stories of genuine apparitions are cases in which the man comes to announce his own death to some one whom he loves. A fair example of such narratives is that of the visit of Captain German Wheatcroft to his wife, and an interesting point in this special case is that through this visit a mistake in official records was discovered and corrected. The story may be found in Mr. R. D. Owen's *Footfalls* (p. 299).

*An Officer's Return.*

"In the month of September, 1857, Captain German Wheatcroft, of the 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons, went out to India to join his regiment.

"His wife remained in England, residing at Cambridge. On the night between the 14th and 15th of November, 1857, towards morning, she dreamed that she saw her husband, looking anxious and ill; upon which she immediately woke, much agitated. It was bright moonlight, and, looking up, she perceived the same figure standing by her bed-side. He appeared in his uniform, the hands pressed across the breast, the hair dishevelled, the face very pale. His large dark eyes were fixed full upon her; their expression was that of great excitement, and there was a peculiar contraction of the mouth, habitual to him when agitated. She saw him, even to each minute particular of his dress, as distinctly as she had ever done in her life; and she remembered to have noticed between his hands the white of the shirt-bosom, unstained, however, with blood. The figure seemed to bend forward as if in pain, and to make an effort to speak; but there was no sound. It remained visible, the wife thinks, as long as a minute, and then disappeared.

"Her first idea was to ascertain if she were actually

awake. She rubbed her eyes with the sheet, and felt that the touch was real. Her little nephew was in bed with her; she bent over the sleeping child and listened to its breathing; the sound was distinct, and she became convinced that what she had seen was no dream. It need hardly be added that she did not again go to sleep that night.

"Next morning she related all this to her mother, expressing her conviction, though she had noticed no marks of blood on his dress, that Captain Wheatcroft was either killed or grievously wounded. So fully impressed was she with the reality of that apparition that she thenceforth refused all invitations. A young friend urged her soon afterwards to go with her to a fashionable concert, reminding her that she had received from Malta, sent by her husband, a handsome dress-cloak, which she had never worn. But she positively declined, declaring that, uncertain as she was whether she was not already a widow, she would never enter a place of amusement until she had letters from her husband (if indeed he still lived) of a later date than the 14th of November.

"It was on a Tuesday, in the month of December, 1857, that the telegram regarding the actual fate of Captain Wheatcroft was published in London. It was to the effect that he was killed before Lucknow on the 15th of November.

"This news, given in the morning paper, attracted the attention of Mr. Wilkinson, a London solicitor, who had in charge Captain Wheatcroft's affairs. When at a later period this gentleman met the widow, she informed him that she had been quite prepared for the melancholy news, but that she felt sure her husband could not have been killed on the 15th of November,

inasmuch as it was during the night between the 14th and 15th that he appeared to her.

"The certificate from the War Office, however, which it became Mr. Wilkinson's duty to obtain, confirmed the date given in the telegram, its tenour being as follows:—

"'No. 9579.

War Office,  
30th January, 1858.

"These are to certify that it appears, by the records in this office, that Captain German Wheatcroft of the 6th Dragoon Guards, was killed in action on the 15th of November 1857.

(Signed)

B. Hawes.'

"While Mr. Wilkinson's mind remained in uncertainty as to the exact date, a remarkable incident occurred, which seemed to cast further suspicion on the accuracy of the telegram and of the certificate. That gentleman was visiting a friend, whose lady has all her life had perception of apparitions, while her husband is what is usually called an impressible medium; facts, which are known, however, only to their intimate friends. Though personally acquainted with them I am not at liberty to give their names. Let us call them Mr. and Mrs. N.

"Mr. Wilkinson related to them, as a wonderful circumstance, the vision of the captain's widow in connection with his death, and described the figure as it had appeared to her. Mrs. N., turning to her husband, instantly said, 'That must be the very person I saw, the evening we were talking of India, and you drew an elephant, with a howdah on his back. Mr. Wilkinson has described his exact position and appearance; the uniform of a British officer, his hands pressed across his breast, his form bent forward as if in pain. The

figure,' she added to Mr. Wilkinson, 'appeared just behind my husband, and seemed looking over his left shoulder.'

" 'Did you attempt to obtain any communication from him?' Mr. Wilkinson asked.

" 'Yes we procured one through the medium of my husband.'

" 'Do you remember its purport?'

" 'It was to the effect that he had been killed in India that afternoon, by a wound in the breast, and adding, as I distinctly remember, "That thing I used to go about in is not buried yet." I particularly remarked the expression.'

" 'When did this happen?'

" 'About nine o'clock in the evening, several weeks ago; but I do not recollect the exact date.'

" 'Can you not call to mind something that might enable you to fix the precise day?'

" 'Mrs. N. reflected. 'I remember nothing,' she said at last, 'except that while my husband was drawing, and I was talking to a lady friend who had called to see us, we were interrupted by a servant bringing in a bill for some German vinegar, and that, as I recommended it as being superior to English, we had a bottle brought in for inspection.'

" 'Did you pay the bill at the time?'

" 'Yes; I sent out the money by the servant.'

" 'Was the bill receipted?'

" 'I think so; but I have it upstairs, and can soon ascertain.' Mrs. N. produced the bill. Its receipt bore date the fourteenth of November!

" 'This confirmation of the widow's conviction as to the day of her husband's death produced so much impression on Mr. Wilkinson, that he called at the office

of Messrs. Cox and Greenwood, the army agents, to ascertain if there was no mistake in the certificate; but nothing there appeared to confirm any surmise of inaccuracy.

"Captain Wheatcroft's death was mentioned in two separate despatches of Sir Colin Campbell, and in both the date corresponded with that given in the telegram.

"So matters rested, until in the month of March, 1858, the family of Captain Wheatcroft received from Captain G. C., then of the Military Train, a letter dated near Lucknow, on the 19th of December, 1857. This letter informed them that Captain Wheatcroft had been killed before Lucknow, while gallantly leading on the squadron, not on the 15th of November, as reported in Sir Colin Campbell's despatches, but on the fourteenth, in the afternoon. Captain C. was riding close by his side at the time he saw him fall. He was struck by a fragment of shell in the breast, and never spoke after he was hit. He was buried at the Dilkosha; and on a wooden cross, erected by his friend, Lieutenant R., of the 9th Lancers, at the head of his grave, are cut the initials G. W., and the date of his death, the 14th of November, 1857.

"The War Office finally made the correction as to the date of death, but not until more than a year after the event occurred. Mr. Wilkinson, having occasion to apply for an additional copy of the certificate in April, 1859, found it in exactly the same words as that which I have given, only that the 14th of November had been substituted for the 15th.

"This extraordinary narrative was obtained by me direct from the parties themselves," says Owen. "The widow of Captain Wheatcroft kindly consented to ex-

amine and correct the manuscript, and allowed me to inspect a copy of Captain C.'s letter, giving the particulars of her husband's death. To Mr. Wilkinson also the manuscript was submitted, and he assented to its accuracy so far as he is concerned. That portion which relates to Mrs. N. I had from that lady herself. I have neglected no precaution, therefore, to obtain for it the warrant of authenticity.

"It is perhaps," concludes Owen, "the only example on record where the appearance of what is usually termed a ghost proved the means of correcting an erroneous date in the despatches of a Commander-in-Chief and of detecting an inaccuracy in the certificate of a War Office. It cannot be alleged that the recital of one lady caused the apparition of the same figure to the other. Mrs. Wheatcroft was at the time in Cambridge, and Mrs. N. in London; and it was not until weeks after the occurrence that either knew what the other had seen. Those who would explain the whole on the principle of chance coincidence have a treble event to take into account—the apparition to Mrs. N., that to Mrs. Wheatcroft, and the actual time of Captain Wheatcroft's death—each tallying exactly with the other."

I have chosen this story for our first one just because of that wealth of verification to which Mr. Owen refers, and also because it brings out several interesting points. We may note that though the captain was able to show himself without special difficulty to the sensitive members of the N. family while they were still awake, he had to wait until his wife was asleep before he could produce any impression upon her mind. He was killed in India during the afternoon, which would of course correspond to the morning in England,

so that he must have been already some ten hours upon the astral plane when he appeared in London, and probably at least three or four more before he was able to show himself to his wife in Cambridge. When he did make the effort, however, it was sufficient to impress his presence upon her, not only while asleep, but also after she woke. There is no evidence to show whether this apparition was a materialization or not.

Another dead person, whose appearance is described by Mr. Owen in *The Debatable Land*, p. 219, had a more receptive relation to deal with, and so was able to manage matters very much better than Captain Wheatcroft. She adopted the simple yet very effective expedient of taking her sister to see her dead physical body, thus convincing her by ocular demonstration that it *was* only the body that was dead, since its owner stood radiant and living beside her as they looked together upon the deserted vehicle. The story, which was related to Mr. Owen by Mrs. L. herself, is as follows:

*Sisterly Thoughtfulness.*

"A sister of Mrs. L.'s, named Esther, recently married, had gone out with her husband to California some weeks before, and they had been expecting, ere long, news of her arrival. One night in a dream this sister seemed to approach Mrs. L.'s bedside and said to her, "Cecilia, come with me to California." Mrs. L. objected that she could not leave her husband and children to undertake a journey so long and tedious.

"'We shall soon be there,' said Esther, 'and you shall return before morning.'

"In her dream the proposed excursion did not seem to her an impossibility; so she rose from bed, and, giv-

ing her hand to her sister, she thought they ascended together and floated over a vast space; then descended near a dwelling of humble and rude appearance, very different from any which she could have imagined her sister to occupy in the new country to which, in search of fortune, she and her husband had emigrated. The sisters entered, and Cecilia recognized her brother-in-law, sad and in mourning garb. Esther then led her into a room in the centre of which stood an open coffin, and pointed to the body it contained. It was Esther's own body, pale with the hue of death. Mrs. L. gazed in mute astonishment, first at the corpse before her, then at the form apparently bright with life and intelligence, which had conducted her thither. To her look of enquiry and wonder the living appearance replied, 'Yes, sister, that body was mine; but disease assailed it. I was taken with cholera and have passed to another world. I desired to show you this, that you might be prepared for the news that will soon reach you.'

"After a time Mrs. L. seemed to herself to rise again into the air, again to traverse a great space and finally to re-enter her bed-chamber."

Both of the cases just quoted are unmistakably apparitions after death, and they show conclusively that man survives it with full consciousness and memory. Neither of them, however, necessarily involves materialization, and it is therefore probable that neither of the visitants would have been visible to ordinary physical sight. Our next instance brings to our notice a materialization sufficiently pronounced to be able to ring a bell and carry on a conversation. It is given in *Glimpses in the Twilight* (p. 188), by Dr. Frederick George Lee, who remarks with reference to it



"The facts of this story are certain and indisputable; I have taken great pains to verify them." I epitomize the earlier part of the narrative, which we may call

*The Return of the Sailor Boy.*

On Croom's Hill, Greenwich, lived a certain Mr. Hammond. Among his servants was one Mrs. Potter, who had a son of fifteen, a sailor boy on board the frigate *Doris*. He was a bright engaging boy, but restless, and had caused his friends great anxiety by deserting his ship. His captain, however, had been induced with some trouble to overlook his desertion and receive him once more. His mother then left Mrs. Hammond and married again, but the boy, being away on service, did not know this. The rest of the narrative I will give in Dr. Lee's own words:—

"On the night of the 8th September, 1866, Mrs. Hammond's street door bell was rung. Mary, the housemaid, answered it; the door was duly opened, and after a little confabulation, the door was shut again. Mrs. Hammond, who was unwell, was in her bedroom, which commands a view of, and is within earshot of the entrance hall. She listened and distinctly identified the voice of Tom Potter. She was surprised and called out, 'Mary, who was that at the door?' The servant replied, 'Oh, Ma'am, it was a little sailor-boy; he wanted his mother. I told him I knew nothing of his mother and sent him about his business.'"

"Mrs. Hammond, whose anxiety was aroused, asked the servant what the boy was like.

"'Well, ma'am, he was a good-looking boy in sailor clothes, and his feet were naked. I should know him again anywhere. He looked very pale and in great distress; and when I told him his mother wasn't here,

he put his hand to his forehead, and said, 'Oh dear, what shall I do?'

"Mrs. Hammond told her husband what an unwelcome visitor had been to the house, and gave him the unpleasant intelligence that 'she was sure Tom Potter had run away from his ship again.'

"They sent to make enquiries of the mother, but she had heard nothing of her son. They went to consult Dr. Todd, the boy's schoolmaster, but he told them—'It is almost impossible Tom Potter can have deserted his ship. I had a letter from the boy himself only about two months ago, and then he was getting on capially.' Dr. Todd had a store of photographs of many of his pupils, and among them was a carte of Tom Potter. He laid a number of these portraits before Mary, and requested her to pick out the one that resembled the boy she saw; at the same time, with the view of testing her accuracy to the utmost, he called her attention to one which was *not* a photograph of Tom Potter, and quietly remarked, 'Do you think that is the boy? He was very likely to run away from his ship.' 'No,' said Mary, positively, 'that was not the boy I saw; this is the one,'—at the same time pouncing upon the likeness of Tom Potter—'I could swear to him.'

"A solution of the mystery was at hand. In the next month of October Dr. Todd received a letter from the Admiralty, stating that they communicated with him because they did not know the address of Tom Potter's mother. The letter gave the sad intelligence that on the 6th September, just two days before he was seen at the door of Mr. Hammond's house, Tom Potter breathed his last, in consequence of a dreadful accident on board the *Doris* frigate off Jamaica."

If the servant had been a little more patient, we might have known much more of this interesting case. As it is, we are left in doubt as to whether Tom Potter knew of his death and had come to break the news to his mother, or whether, as his final exclamation would seem to suggest, he did not yet realize his own decease, and simply supposed himself to be coming home. When he became a little more used to the astral world, he would probably discover that a strong wish to see his mother would take him to her, wherever she might happen to be; but evidently at first he thought only (as was of course quite natural) of seeking her at the place where he had last left her, precisely as we should do on the physical plane.

Here is another case of a son who comes to announce to a parent his sudden death—a case presenting some unusual and interesting features.

*Apparition of a Patron Saint.*

It appears that Mr. James Weld, of Archer's Lodge, near Southampton, had a son Philip, who was at school at St. Edmund's Collège, Ware. Philip was one day drowned while boating, and Dr. Cox, the principal of the college, went himself the next morning to bear the sad news to his father.

"On arriving there and being shown into his private study, Dr. Cox found Mr. Weld in tears. The latter rising from his seat and taking the doctor by the hand, said, 'My dear sir, you need not tell me what you are come for. I know it already. Philip is dead. Yesterday I was walking with my daughter Katharine on the turnpike road, in broad daylight, and Philip appeared to us both. He was standing on the causeway with another young man in a black robe by his

side. My daughter was the first to perceive him. She said to me, "Look there, papa; there is Philip." I looked and saw him. I said to my daughter, "It is Philip, indeed; but he has the look of an angel." Not suspecting that he was dead, though greatly wondering that he was there, I went towards him with my daughter to embrace him; but a few yards being between us, while I was going up to him a labouring man, who was walking on the same causeway, passed between the apparition and the hedge, and as he went on I saw him pass through their apparent bodies, as if they were transparent. On perceiving this I at once felt sure that they were spirits, and going forward with my daughter to touch them, Philip sweetly smiled on us, and then both he and his companion vanished away.'

"The reader may imagine how deeply affected Dr. Cox was on hearing this remarkable statement. He of course corroborated it by relating to the afflicted father the circumstances attendant on his son's death, which had taken place at the very hour in which he appeared to his father and sister.

"Dr. Cox asked Mr. Weld who the young man in the black robe was who had accompanied his son, and who appeared to have a most beautiful and angelic countenance, but he said that he had not the slightest idea.

"A few weeks afterwards, however, Mr. Weld was on a visit to the neighbourhood of Stonyhurst in Lancashire. After hearing Mass one morning in the chapel, he, while waiting for his carriage, was shown into the guest room, where, walking up to the fire-place, he saw a picture above the chimney-piece, which represented a young man in a black robe with the very face, form and attitude of the companion of Philip as he saw

him in the vision, and beneath the picture was inscribed 'S. Stanislaus Kostka,' one of the greatest saints of the Jesuit order, and the one whom Philip had chosen for his patron saint at his confirmation." (*Glimpses of the Supernatural*, by Dr. F. G. Lee, vol. ii, p. 51.)

Dr Lee appends to this story the certificates of those from whom he received it, and also records the various confirmatory letters written by others who were conversant with the facts. The apparition of Philip to his father and sister at the moment of, or very soon after, his death is exactly parallel with a hundred other occurrences of the same type. Yet this account differs radically from that of Tom Potter's ghost; the latter was very clearly a materialization, while this apparition just as evidently was not, for if it had been it must have been seen by the labourer as well as by the father and sister. These two dearly loved ones must have been in close sympathy with the deceased brother, and so it would be easy for him to raise their vibrations sufficiently to make them see him, while the labourer, upon whom no magnetic force was directed, walked straight through the ghost stolidly unimpressible. This fact again can be paralleled from other similar narratives; for example, in "The Cadet's Story," published some years ago in *The Theosophical Review*, the Major's ghost was visible to his friends, but not to the boatmen, who were less closely in touch with him.

#### *Possible Explanations.*

The really unusual feature of this tale is the presence with the dead man of another figure, not at the time recognized, but afterwards identified by means of a portrait as his patron saint. Of this second apparition

there are several explanations possible, and it is not easy to divine which is the true one. First, such a figure may be actually exactly what it professes to be—a man living on the astral plane. This may really have been St. Stanislaus Kostka, still staying in the astral world in order to strengthen and help those who were specially attracted to him, and in that case his presence along with his devotee at this critical period would be very natural. But though this is a possibility, and as such not to be ignored, it is scarcely a probability. The death of St. Stanislaus Kostka took place very many years ago, and it is exceedingly unlikely that a man of his type would have remained so long in the astral world, even though he died at an early age. To have maintained himself there so long as this would have required a most phenomenal strength of will, aided by a collocation of very unlikely circumstances. For a man of strong will, but of exceedingly gross and degraded life, such a feat would be possible; but not for one of great gentleness, purity and devotion, such as he is represented to have been.

Another view is that the saint may have been simply a thought-form—an accessory introduced into the picture either intentionally or unintentionally by Philip himself. Instances of the undoubted introduction in this manner of accessories on quite a large scale will be given later.

Philip seems to have been a pious young man, and in his frequent ecstatic meditations he is certain to have made a very strong and vivid thought-form of his patron saint; at and after his death he would naturally think of himself as accompanied and protected by this saint, and that conviction would be quite sufficient to make the thought-image (already half-mater-

ialized by his constant and fervid contemplation) visible to his father and sister.

In stating this, I am not, I trust, writing in the least unsympathetically, nor seeking to destroy the beautiful faith in saintly guardianship; I am simply endeavouring to arrive at the true scientific explanation of a remarkable phenomenon, and in doing so I am compelled to take into account all the hypotheses which my studies have shown me to be possibilities. I am bound therefore to admit that one of those possibilities is that Philip's patron saint *may* have been merely a product of his own vivid imagination, though I do not myself regard this as probable.

Supposing for the moment that this were so, Philip, whose object in showing himself to his father and sister must obviously have been to prepare them for the news of his death, and to console and reassure them with regard to it, may well have prayed that his patron saint might appear along with him as evidence to his father that he was in good hands and safely amid the company of the blessed, and in such a case there is little doubt that the strong wish involved in the effort of prayer would be sufficiently potent to cause its own immediate fulfilment. Thus if Philip had unwittingly created his own patron saint he may have brought him with him intentionally or unintentionally, and if he did this, there would be nothing wonderful or unusual in the feat, for I have myself seen cases of exactly similar nature.

Although this suggestion would adequately account for everything that happened, it seems to me that there is another which is on the whole much more likely to be the correct explanation, and that is, that Philip's vivid thought-form (created as before suggested)

may have been utilized by some friend who was interested in him and anxious to help him. There are so many cases in which our present band of living though unseen helpers find that the best (and indeed often the only) way to render efficient aid to certain classes of people is to work along the lines of their preconceived ideas—to enter the thought-forms which they have made and act through them, in order to offer assistance from the only quarter whence it would be gratefully accepted instead of being rejected with suspicion. Consequently, if (as might very well happen) some dead Jesuit had been attracted by the piety of this young man and wished to instruct and encourage him, much the easiest and most efficient way to do so would be through the medium of his own thought-image of his patron saint.

If this be the explanation, then it is also very probable that the astral helper assisted Philip in making himself visible to his father and sister, and in fact, managed the whole affair—perhaps even suggested it to relieve Philip's anxiety as to how his father would be affected by the news of his death. Thus St. Stanislaus may have been a reality or merely an accessory, but I suspect him to have been a recently deceased friend of the family or of the Order, taking the form in which he thought he could be most useful, and thus furnishing us with a good, effective and well-authenticated ghost story.

The following, though far less dramatic than the last, is a good specimen of the ordinary apparition at the time of death, and has the advantage of being related directly to our informant by the Swedish clergyman to whom the incident occurred. It is extracted from *The Theosophical Review*, vol. xxii, p. 177.



*Seen by Sixteen.*

“During some years of my boyhood I was at a school in the Parish of Tingstäde, and as my home was at some distance, I was lodged, in company with another school-fellow, at the house of a resident named Fru Smith. This good lady had a tolerably large house, and gained her livelihood by taking boarders and lodgers; in fact, there were no less than sixteen people living there at the time of which I am speaking. Fru Smith also acted occasionally in the capacity of midwife, and was often absent.

Late one afternoon in mid-winter she informed us that she was going away on a visit, and could not possibly return until some time the following day, so she arranged everything necessary for our meals, etc., and bidding us be very careful with regard to lights and fire, she left us, and as usual during the evening we were occupied in preparing our lessons for the next day. By half-past nine we were in bed, and had locked our door and put out our lamp, but there was sufficient light in the room coming from the glowing wood-ashes in the stove to enable us to see everything quite distinctly. We were quietly talking, when suddenly we saw—standing by our bed-side and regarding us most intently—the figure of a tall, middle-aged man looking like a peasant, dressed in ordinary grey clothes, but with what appeared to us as a big white patch on the left leg, and another on the left breast. My companion nudged me sharply, and whispered, ‘What ugly man is that?’ I signed to him to be silent and we both lay still watching eagerly.

“The man stood looking at us for a long time, and then he turned and began walking up and down the

room, his footsteps seeming to cause a rasping sound, as if he were walking upon snow. He went over to the chest of drawers and opened and shut them all, as if looking for something, and after that he went to the stove and began to blow gently upon the yet glowing ashes, holding out his hands as if to warm them. After this he returned to our bedside and again stood looking at us. As we gazed at him we observed that we could see things through him; we saw plainly the bureau on the other side of the room through his body, and whilst we were looking his form seemed gradually to disappear, and vanished from our sight. The strangeness of this caused us to feel uneasy and nervous, but we did not stir from our bed, and at last fell asleep.

"Our door was still locked when we got up in the morning, but in mentioning what we had witnessed, we heard that the same ghostly visitor had appeared in every room in the house—the doors of which were all locked—and that every one of the sixteen persons sleeping there that night had seen the same figure. Moreover, some of these people who had been resident there for a length of time recognized the figure as that of the husband of our landlady, a worthless sort of fellow who had never settled usefully to anything, and had lived away from his wife for some years, so that he had long been a wanderer on the face of the earth.

"This strange coincidence naturally caused some of the residents to make enquiries whether such a person had been seen anywhere in the neighbourhood, and it was ascertained that the same evening a little after nine o'clock he had called at a farmhouse two miles distant, and had asked for a night's lodging; as there was no room, he had been directed to the next farm,

which was across a field near by. Upon hearing this the investigators at once looked in the snow for traces of his footsteps, and very soon they came across them. After following them a little way they came upon a wooden shoe, and a few yards further on they discovered the dead body of the man himself, half buried in a deep snowdrift. On turning the body over it was perceived that a large frozen clump of snow adhered to the left breast, and another to the left knee, precisely on the same spots where we had remarked the white spots on the clothing of the apparition. Although I was but a boy when this happened, it made such a deep and lasting impression upon me that the memory of it has remained with me most vividly all through my life."

The case is an ordinary one, unusual only in the number of those to whom the apparition showed himself. The probabilities would seem to be in favour of a partial materialization, since it is unlikely that he could impress himself mesmerically upon so large a number of people, probably of varying temperaments. The fact that he was seen to open and shut drawers would also point to the same hypothesis. He must have had in his mind a strong desire for shelter and warmth, and very likely also the thought of searching every room in the house for his wife's money, which would account for his visiting all in turn. His action in blowing at the embers and warming his hands would seem to show that he did not know of his death. Indeed, there is no certain evidence as to whether he was actually dead at the moment of apparition, or only in the stupor which usually precedes death from cold. It will be noticed that he followed the usual custom of such ghosts in showing himself exactly as his body

really was, with the patches of snow on the clothing, and he even added the realistic touch of the crunching sound of the boots upon the snow as he walked.

It seems scarcely conceivable that a man of this type had consciously thought out these details in such an emergency—the more so as he does not appear to have been in any way specially anxious to impress himself upon the boys, but only to have regarded them with curiosity, as though to see who they were, or whether they could be useful to him. But there are many cases which tend to show that when the dead man is strongly impressed with any idea, it may manifest itself symbolically in connection with the apparition without detailed thought on his part; and there can be little doubt that the deadly snow must have been prominent in the mind of this unfortunate wanderer.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THOSE WHO RETURN TO HELP.

#### *Maternal Love.*

Some of the dead are still watching closely over certain friends or relations in earth-life, and any manifestations which they make are for the purpose of helping or guarding these friends. One of the most beautiful of such cases is that related by Dr. John Mason Neale, which, though I have already cited it in *Invisible Helpers*, I will repeat here, because it is one of the clearest and most obvious examples that I know, besides being a delightful little story. Dr. Neale states that a man who had recently lost his wife was on a visit with his little children at the country house of a friend. It was a rambling mansion, and in the lower part of it there were long, dark passages, in which the children played about with great delight. But presently they came upstairs very gravely, and two of them related that as they were running down one of the passages they were met by their mother, who told them to go back again, and then disappeared. Investigation revealed the fact that if the children had run but a few steps farther they would have fallen down a deep uncovered well which yawned full in their path, so that the apparition of their mother had saved them from almost certain death.

In this instance there seems no doubt that the mother herself was still keeping a loving watch over her children from the astral plane, and that (as has happened in some other cases) her intense desire to warn them of the

danger into which they were so heedlessly rushing gave her the power to make herself visible and audible to them for the moment—or perhaps merely to impress their minds with the idea that they saw and heard her. It is possible, of course, that the helper may have been some one else, who took the familiar form of the mother in order not to alarm the children; but the simplest hypothesis, and by far the most probable, is to attribute the intervention to the action of the ever-wakeful mother-love, undimmed by the passage through the gates of death.

It is always possible for the dead (or for the living helper on the astral plane) to assume some familiar form when they so desire, in order that their message may be more readily accepted and acted upon in some emergency.

*Delivered from Danger.*

A remarkable story illustrating this possibility is told in a volume called *News from the Invisible World* of Miss Elizabeth Smith, daughter of Colonel Smith of Piercefield, on the river Wye. It appears from an account drawn up by the lady herself that she had started off upon a sketching expedition upon the hills near Ullswater, and in taking a short cut across the mountain side near the cataract called Aira Force, she contrived to get herself into a position from which there seemed no possibility of exit. She could neither progress nor retrace her steps, and felt in horrible danger of falling. "Suddenly, however, as she swept the whole circuit of her station with her alarmed eye, she saw clearly, about two hundred yards beyond her own position, a lady in a white muslin morning-robe, such as were then universally worn by young ladies until dinner time. The lady beckoned with a gesture, and in a manner that, in a

moment, gave her confidence to advance—how, she could not guess, but in some way that baffled all power to retrace it, she found instantaneously the outlet which previously had escaped her. She continued to advance towards the lady, whom now, in the same moment, she found to be standing upon the other side of the ‘force’ and, also, to be her own sister. How and why that young lady, whom she had left at home earnestly occupied with her own studies, should have followed and overtaken her, filled her with perplexity. But this was no situation for putting questions; for the guiding sister began to descend, and by a few simple gestures, just serving to indicate when Miss Elizabeth was to approach and when to leave the brink of the torrent, she gradually led her down to a platform of rock, from which the further descent was safe and conspicuous. There Miss Smith paused, in order to take breath from her panic, as well as to exchange greetings and questions with her sister. But sister there was none! All trace of her had vanished; and when, two hours after, she reached her home, Miss Smith found her sister in the same situation and employment in which she had left her; and the whole family assured Elizabeth that her sister had never stirred from the house.”

There is nothing in this story to show us whether the helper was drawn from the ranks of the dead or the living. If the sister had been asleep at the time, we might readily suppose that she herself had observed Miss Smith’s condition of terror and danger, and hastened to the rescue; but this idea is negatived by the fact that the younger sister had remained engaged in the same occupation all the while. Some one else, therefore, obviously took her shape, but there is no definite proof that this was a dead person. It will be seen that this power

of personation is a weapon which might as easily be employed for harm as for good, and I have little doubt that there have been cases in which it has been so used. One of the unsatisfactory points connected with the spiritualistic séance is the undoubted fact that personations often take place, and that it is quite impossible for the ordinary person who has not developed a high degree of clairvoyance to detect them.

*The Call to the Priest.*

In *Sights and Shadows* (pp. 94 *et seq.*) Dr. Lee gives us two very interesting instances of the return of the dead to obtain what they considered necessary spiritual consolation for their surviving relations. In the first case an old woman who has been dead ten years calls a priest to attend a young man who is very near his last end. The priest, on paying a visit to the house indicated, finds no one ill there, but meets and converses with a young man who, having been a Catholic in his earlier years, had of late neglected the duties prescribed by his church. The priest persuades him to make a confession, and exhorts him to resume a religious life. In the night following the young man dies of heart disease, and on going to make arrangements for the burial the priest finds the portrait of his mysterious visitor, and discovers that she was the mother of the dead man, but had herself departed this life ten years previously. In the second case two little children call a priest to the bedside of their dying father, describing carefully exactly where he is to be found. The priest, on visiting the dying man, discovers that he is quite alone, and had been regretting that he had no one to send to fetch his spiritual father. The children, whom he at once recognized from the



priest's description, had been dead for some time, but the exact period is not given.

All these which we have instanced are examples of isolated interventions, called forth by the imminence of some special danger. But cases of definite long-continued effort are not wanting, though they are naturally less common, because, as has been explained in previous chapters, the best and most helpful of the dead are not likely to stay long within reach and sight of the earth-life—unless, indeed, they specially devote themselves to a certain piece of work connected with the physical plane, as did the husband mentioned on p. 79.

Another remarkable case of the continuation after death of philanthropic physical work is recorded by Dr. Minot J. Savage in *Ainslee's Magazine* for March, 1902, vol. ix, p. 117. His account, much abridged, is as follows:

*Astral Philanthropy.*

A few years ago there was a famous preacher to the poor in the city of Boston. He and his wife were both particularly interested in those who had few other friends. In his old age this preacher had a colleague to help him in his work among these poor people, and in due course of time both the preacher, his wife and the colleague died, the only survivor of the original band of devoted workers being the colleague's widow. This lady appears to have been mediumistic, or at any rate readily impressible. The dead preacher and his wife still retained their friendly interest in their poor parishioners, and though many of these latter had moved away into other towns, these devoted ministrants apparently never lost sight of them. They used to impress the surviving

widow to go and render such help as they saw that any of their poor friends needed.

"For a series of years a loving labour of charity and help was carried on, involving no glory, no notoriety, no publicity, but the opposite. It cost effort and money to carry on this work, and nobody but two or three intimate friends was ever let into the secret. . . . The widow lived in a town not far from Boston. She would receive orders to go into town to such a street and such a number, and would be told that there she would find such and such person or persons in such and such a condition, and she was to render them the service that was needed.

"Cases like this occurred over and over and over again. She would follow these directions, knowing absolutely nothing about the case except that which had thus been told her, and she said that there was never a mistake made. She always found the person and the condition as they had been described to her, and she did for them what their case required. In one instance she travelled to a city in another state under orders like these, knowing not even the name of the person she was to seek out, except that which had been told her. She found the case, however, as it had been reported, and rendered assistance. Not all of these were cases of mere physical need. Some of them were instances of rescue from moral peril, the description of which would read like a chapter in a sensational story.

"As a part of this general ministry, another happening is worthy of record. The daughter of this old minister received explicit orders claiming to come from her father through his colleague's widow as the medium, to enclose twenty dollars in an envelope and send it to another town, directing it to an address of which she had

never heard. She hesitated about sending the money in this way, and wanted to wait and get a cheque so as to avoid risk of loss. She was peremptorily ordered, however, not to wait, as the matter was one of immediate and vital importance. She sent the money as thus directed, two ten-dollar bills. I have had the privilege of reading the letter acknowledging its receipt. It was written with difficulty with a lead pencil, and the grammar and spelling were poor. It told a story of abuse and desertion on the part of the husband. The forsaken wife had done all she could to keep her little family together. She had reached the end of her endeavours, had just pawned her last bit of decent furniture, and with the proceeds had bought some charcoal and was making preparations to go out of the world and take her children with her when the money arrived."

This case is interesting as being recent, but it is probably only a specimen of a considerable class of which the world never hears anything. Perhaps extended philanthropy like this is not very common, but certainly the special guardianship of an individual by some dead friend or relation is by no means unusual. The mentor manifests himself in various ways, sometimes through automatic writing, sometimes through raps or by the use of a planchette or ouija, sometimes through dreams, perhaps most frequently through strong mental impressions, which the person guided probably calls infallible intuitions.

*Gaspar.*

It is more rarely that the guardianship manifests itself by the giving of advice in audible speech, but of this also we have some instances. One is recorded in *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World*, p. 339—

a case in which a family was for three years constantly watched over and advised by a voice which every member of it, and even their servants, repeatedly heard. The dead man from whom the voice came gave the name of Gaspar, but declined to furnish any particulars as to his earth-life. His presence seems to have been always a pleasure to all members of the family, and his advice invariably turned out well. He showed himself only twice, and in both cases out-of-doors, dressed in a large cloak and a broad-brimmed hat, suggestive of Southern Europe. He never touched upon religious subjects, but always strongly advocated virtue and harmony.

In this case it does not appear that the dead counsellor was in any way related to the family. He seems just to have encountered them casually, found that they were friendly and receptive, and so struck up an acquaintance and remained in touch with them. Evidently some member of the family must have been mediumistic, so that matter could be borrowed from her in order to produce the physical voice and the two materializations. When they removed to another country he did not accompany them, and indeed very possibly he may have been about to rise to a level from which communication would have been more difficult.

Sometimes a dead man will return merely in order to give advice, as seems to be the case in the following story, which presents some interesting features to the student.

#### *In a Crowded Street.*

The speaker was Mr. David Dick, auctioneer, of 98 Sauchiehall Street, a young married man, about thirty-five, a member of the Glasgow Ruskin Society. "I have seen a ghost," he said, "and I find it utterly impossible

to explain it on any so-called natural grounds." "Was it the ghost of a living or of a dead person?" "A ghost of a dead person." "How long had it been dead?" "Six years." "Where did you see it?" "In Glasgow." "In the day or night?" "At half past three in the afternoon, in broad daylight." "But tell us how it occurred?" "I had left the office in Sauchiehall Street at half past three in the afternoon. I was going on an errand to St. Vincent Street, and had my mind full of my business. I went along Sauchiehall Street and entered Renfield Street, where the ghost joined me." "You knew it was a ghost?" "Perfectly." "How did you know it was a ghost?" "Because I recognized it at once." "Did it speak to you?" "It did." "What did it say to you?" "That I cannot tell you; it spoke of a matter which was only known to myself." "You answered?" "Yes, and continued to walk on, the ghost accompanying me exactly as if it had been an ordinary person. We walked down Renfield Street together, talking. There was nothing in the appearance of the ghost to impress any one who met it that it was not a living man. It wore a black coat and a flat felt hat which I had only seen worn once in the lifetime of the deceased. The part of Renfield Street we traversed together is about two hundred and fifty yards long, and one of the busiest streets in Glasgow. When I got to the corner of Vincent Street the ghost vanished. I did not see it come, and I did not see it go; I only knew it was not there." "Were you not frightened?" "Not the least in the world." "Did you ask it any questions?" "No, none; I simply carried on the conversation which it had begun." "Did not its sudden disappearance disturb you?" "Not at all; it joined me without notice, and left me as simply. I did not see it dissolve; it simply was not there any longer."

"And you knew the ghost?" "Perfectly." "Who was it, may I ask?" "It was the ghost of my father." "Were you thinking of your father?" "Not at all." "And when he spoke to you, were you not surprised?" "Not in the least." "Nor inquisitive?" "No, it seemed so natural. I was chiefly thinking of the place I was going to. In fact, it was not until the next day that I began to realize how strange it was that I had been speaking familiarly to my father, six years after he had died, in a busy Glasgow street. But that it was so I have not the slightest doubt in the world. That I know. I have had no other experience of a similar nature; all that I know is that I did walk down Renfield Street with my father six years after his death."

"The 'vision,' as you call it, suggested, without insisting, that I was annoying myself too much about affairs which did not really lie in my power, and that events might prove my worry quite senseless, which they did. There was neither definite prophecy nor promise. Had there been I should have said the 'ghost' was a pure swindle, my father having been a man so reserved that William the Silent was a chatterer to him."

This story was told directly to Mr. Stead by Mr. Dick in 1891. He gives it in *Real Ghost Stories* (p. 184.). The most remarkable feature in it is the appearance of the dead person in broad daylight in a busy street. But it will be observed that we have no evidence that any one else out of all the crowd in that busy street saw the apparition; so that it is quite possible that it may have been only a mental impression made by the father upon the son. One of the strangest things in the narrative is surely the preoccupation of Mr. Dick, which was so great that it did not strike him as remarkable that he should be conversing with his father, whom he

knew to be dead. In this case the dead man appears to have been actuated by the desire to give a piece of friendly advice, though with reference to a matter which does not seem to have been of primary importance.

More frequently, however, it is for some matter of serious import that the departed break the customary silence of the grave. It may well be that, as the Bretons think, if we were only less involved in our petty personal interests, we should much oftener have the benefit of what may very truly be called ghostly counsel. But as matters stand at present we ourselves usually put such serious difficulties in the way of any communication, and our friends who die are so little in the habit of regarding such communication as possible, that it is only under stress of some really cogent reason that most of them endeavour to reach us. Not infrequently they visit some one whom they love in order to warn him of his own approaching death. In some cases their wish to do this comes from the religious theory as to the necessity of special preparation for death; in others, it is simply the desire to give the man time to make his arrangements, or to enable him by such premonition to lessen the shock to his family and friends. A quite recent example of an apparition with this object is given by Dr. Minot J. Savage in the same article from which we quoted the story of the philanthropic preacher. He relates it as follows:

*A Paternal Warning.*

"This case occurred about a couple of years ago here in the immediate vicinity of New York. There was a certain young man who had been studying abroad. He had been at Heidelberg University. He was of anything but an imaginative temperament. Tall and stal-

wart in build, he had a reputation as an athlete. His favourite studies were mathematical, physical and electrical. He had returned home from abroad, and, so far as anybody knew, was in perfect health. He was at the summer home of his mother. It was his habit after dinner to go out on the piazza and walk up and down while smoking his pipe. One evening he came quietly in, and without talking with anybody, went to bed. The next morning he went into his mother's room before she was up and laid his hand on her cheek in order to awaken her quietly. Then he said, 'Mother, I have something very sad to tell you. You must brace yourself and be strong to bear it.' Of course she was startled, and asked him what he was talking about. He said, 'Mother, I mean just what I am saying. I am going to die very soon.'

"When his mother, startled and troubled, pressed him for an explanation, he said: 'Last night when I was walking up and down the piazza, smoking, a spirit appeared and walked up and down by my side. I have received my call, and am going to die.' The mother, of course, was seriously troubled, and wondered whether anything might be the matter with him. She therefore sent for the doctor and told him the story. The doctor made a careful examination, said there was nothing the matter, treated the whole thing as a bad dream or a hallucination, told him to pay no attention to it, and said that within a few days they would be laughing at themselves for letting such a thing worry them.

"The next morning the young man did not seem quite as well as usual, and the doctor was sent for a second time. Again he said there was nothing the matter, and tried to laugh them out of their fears. The third morning the young man appeared in still poorer



condition, and the third time the physician was summoned. He now discovered a case of appendicitis. The young man was operated on, and died in a couple of days. From the time of the vision until his death not more than five days had gone by.

"Some time after this experience the mother visited a psychic here in New York. She made no previous appointment, but went as a perfect stranger and waited her turn. The son claimed at once to be present, and told his mother a whole series of very remarkable things, which by no possibility could the psychic ever have known. Then, in answer to the question, 'Who was it that you saw that night?' (the question being purposely so framed as not to seem to refer to anybody out of the body) he at once replied, 'It was my father.' The father had been dead for some years, and the mother had been married again."

Many of the ancestral apparitions connected with some of our old families seem to have taken upon themselves this office of warning their descendants when the close of their earthly span is approaching. Usually their desire to do this seems to be an outcome of inordinate pride of race; but sometimes it appears to be undertaken with the idea that it is in some sort an expiation for foul deeds done in the flesh, and in other cases it is simply due to warm affection for their posterity, or deep interest in the honour of the house. It is in the great families where this interest has become a dominant passion that such appearances are most common.

#### *Ancestral Apparitions.*

The story of the White Lady of Neuhaus is one of the well-authenticated accounts of family ghosts. She is identified by existing portraits as the daughter of

Ulrich von Rosenberg and Katharine of Wartenburg, and lived about the middle of the fifteenth century. There is nothing in so much of her history as is known to explain her long-continued stay in the immediate neighbourhood of the earth, unless the fact that she led a very unhappy married life may in some way or other be connected with the question. At any rate, for some centuries now she seems to have been showing herself at intervals, and her appearance is always connected with deaths in certain high families closely related to her. It is universally understood among her descendants that her intention is benevolent, and that her object is to give timely warning of dissolution to those in whom she is interested.

The Black Lady of Darmstadt is another of these historical *revenants*. Three recent cases of her appearance are given by Dr. Lee in his book *Sights and Shadows*, p. 73, and in each of them it was followed very speedily by the death of a member of the royal house. In her case there is this curious additional complication, that she seems intolerant of any interference with her movements; for on one occasion, when a young officer endeavoured to seize her or to fire upon her, he was found dead, though without any sign of external injury, but his gun was broken, its barrel twisted like a corkscrew, and wholly detached from the splintered stock.

Sometimes an ancestor arranges to warn his descendants of impending death by methods which, while equally effective, are much less inconvenient to himself than a continued haunting must be. He provides for them something in the nature of a recognized omen, and no doubt feels that posterity ought to be grateful to him, though I imagine that his expectations in this respect are by no means invariably fulfilled. Omens, however,

belong to another division of our subject, which will be treated in due course.

We have on record a large number of instances in which two people, while living, have made an agreement that whichever of them died first should return and make himself visible to the other—usually with the object of convincing him of the reality of the life after death. We can imagine many reasons which might prevent the fulfilment of so rash a promise; yet there are not a few cases before us in which such an undertaking has been carried out to the letter. From them I will select two or three as specimens, commencing by quoting from Mr. Andrew Lang's *Dreams and Ghosts*, p. 97, the well-known story told by Lord Brougham—well known not for its singularity, for there are many in every way equal to it, but because of the eminence and reputation of the author. The account is somewhat condensed, in order to save space.

*Lord Brougham's Story.*

"At one in the morning, arriving at a decent inn (in Sweden), we decided to stop for the night, and found a couple of comfortable rooms. Tired with the cold of yesterday, I was glad to take advantage of a hot bath before I turned in. And here a most remarkable thing happened to me—so remarkable that I must tell the story from the beginning.

"After I left the High School, I went with G., my most intimate friend, to attend the classes in the University. . . . We actually committed the folly of drawing up an agreement, written with our own blood, to the effect that whichever of us died first should appear to the other, and thus solve any doubts we had entertained of the life after death. G. went to India, years

passed, and I had nearly forgotten his existence. I had taken, as I have said, a warm bath, and while lying in it and enjoying the comfort of the heat, I turned my head round, looking towards the chair on which I had deposited my clothes, as I was about to get out of the bath. On the chair sat G., looking calmly at me. How I got out of the bath, I know not, but on recovering my senses I found myself sprawling on the floor. The apparition or whatever it was that had taken the likeness of G. had disappeared. . . . So strongly was I affected by it that I have here written down the whole history, with the date, 19th of December, and all the particulars as they are now fresh before me."

On 16th October, 1862, Lord Brougham copied this extract for his autobiography, and says that on his arrival at Edinburgh he received a letter from India, announcing that G. had died on the 19th December.

Another well-authenticated case of this appearance of a dead man in fulfilment of a promise is that in which the Rev. Theodore Buckley, one of the chaplains of Christ Church, Oxford, showed himself three days after his death to his friend Mr. Kenneth Mackenzie. (*Glimpses in the Twilight*, p. 82.)

Another example is the agreement made between Major Sydenham and Captain Dyke, that whichever of them might die first should appear to the survivor at a certain summer-house in Major Sydenham's grounds at midnight on the third day after his departure from this physical plane. The Major died first, and the Captain duly kept the tryst, but the Major failed to put in an appearance, though his friend waited from 11.30 till 2 o'clock. Six weeks later, however, he showed himself clearly in the Captain's bedroom, and explained that he was unable to keep the appointment, but that there cer-

tainly was a future life—which had apparently been the subject of their discussions. He said nothing as to the nature of the obstacles which had prevented him from coming before, but we may readily imagine that he had not fully regained consciousness so soon after his death—or, if he was conscious, he may very probably have been unable to effect a materialization for any one of various reasons. The story may be found in Glanville's *Sadducismus Triumphatus*.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THOSE WHO NEED HELP.

We have now considered a number of instances in which men have returned from the dead from altruistic motives, but we have still to examine specimens from the even greater number of cases in which they returned because they were themselves in want of some help which the living could render. In very many cases the need is an imaginary one, and based upon mere conventional ideas. The dead man, for example, may be greatly troubled because his body is unburied, or (if he happens to be a Catholic) because the requisite number of masses have not been said for the repose of his soul. He may be troubled with regard to debts which he owes, or with regard to debts which are owed to him; he may be troubled because he has left treasure behind him, or because he has not; he may have on his mind some neglect or some crime which he desires to confess, or for which he wishes to make atonement; he may be moved by remorse or revenge. Sometimes the object for which he returns will seem to us decidedly trivial, and not worth the trouble which it must cost him; in other cases his motive is clearly sufficient and praiseworthy. To this latter class belong the many instances in which men have returned to explain where a missing will could be found, so that justice might be done among their survivors; or those others in which they have come back to arrange for the due maintenance and care of those dependent upon them.

*Captain Blomberg.*

A striking case of this kind is that of Captain Blomberg, who died very suddenly when with his regiment in Martinique. At the moment of his death he was away from the barracks, conveying important despatches to a distant part of the island. Under these circumstances he appeared to two of his brother-officers, who were sharing a room in the barracks, and told one of them that he had died that night, and had come to ask his friend to take charge of his orphan boy. He gave the address of the child's relations in London, asked that he should be sent to their care, and furthermore stated that the boy's claim to certain property might be established by means of some papers which were to be found in a drawer which he described. The address so given proved to be correct, and the title-deeds to the property were found exactly where he said they would be. This affair acquired considerable notoriety and eventually came to the ears of Queen Charlotte, who was greatly interested and ordered the child to be received into the Royal nursery, and brought up under her direct care and superintendence. He afterwards became a well-known metropolitan clergyman in the early part of the last century. The full story may be found in *The Haunted Homes and Family Traditions of Great Britain*, by John H. Ingram, p. 637.

*Why Not Oftener?*

The mind of the average man runs very much in conventional grooves, and his first comment on hearing such a story as this is usually, "If this be true, why do not such things happen oftener? Why does not every dead man who has suddenly left the earth-life return and complete his arrangements? There are very many missing papers

which are never found, there is much injustice which is never righted."

Now, of course our business is to observe, record and examine the facts which are offered to us, rather than to speculate why they are not other than they are; and the fact that a certain occurrence happens comparatively rarely does not justify us either in refusing to credit it when it does take place or in complaining that it does not happen more frequently. Nevertheless it is not difficult for the student of occult phenomena to offer certain suggestions in answer to such questions as these.

The number of interventions on the part of the dead is in reality very much larger than we ever suspect, though it is comparatively rarely that they need to go to the length of visible apparition. Often their strong thought is sufficient to act upon the minds of the survivors, and so convey to them the wishes of the deceased, or tell them where to search for whatever may be needed. It is usually only when such more ordinary methods have failed that our departed friend tries stronger measures; and we may furthermore be quite certain that for every case of an apparition of which we hear there are a dozen of which the world never knows; for people are naturally reticent with regard to experiences of a nature so private and sacred.

We must remember also that many men remain unconscious for a considerable period after death, as has previously been explained, and that when they do awaken their minds are usually very much occupied with their own affairs and the new circumstances in which they may find themselves. Most of all, owing to the lamentable ignorance of the vast majority of people on these all-important subjects, the average man has no conception as to how he should go to work to convey his thought from



the astral life to the physical—no idea of the possibilities of telepathy, no knowledge of his power to materialize or to impress himself upon the mental vision of his friends.

Then the friends on their side are commonly entirely unreceptive; their thoughts are fixed upon material things, they regard the dead man as vanished altogether from this world, and to expect help or communication from him would be the last idea that would enter their minds. In fact the situation may be summed up by saying that the average ghost does not know how to show himself even if he wishes to do so, and the average man on the physical plane has no idea how to make it possible for him to do so. The wonder is, not that so few dead men show themselves, but that any of them ever succeed in breaking through the triple armour of our blank ignorance, our boastful scepticism, and our ironclad prejudices. If we were only a little wiser and less conceited, how much we might learn, and how much fuller and happier our lives might be! No doubt many a time the dead try to reach the living, and fail to do so from no fault of their own; our denseness, our materialism, our selfish pre-occupation shut out from us so much that is of the deepest interest, much that is both instructive and edifying. The majority of humanity is as yet painfully like "the man with the muck-rake" in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, who persistently continued to grope in the mud for worthless coins, and refused to look up at the angel who stood above him, holding out to him an imperishable crown.

After death, as during life, some people are much influenced by conventional thought; and I have encountered numerous cases in which the principal concern in the mind of the newly-departed was that her fu-

neral should be well attended, and mournfully gorgeous in its panoply of woe! This is especially true among a certain class of the poor, who seem to regard the funeral as a kind of final entertainment given by the deceased, which reflects great credit upon him when carried out in proper style. It is not only in our modern days that anxiety about burial is common; in classical days that feeling was even stronger, though there it was complicated by a superstition that until the body was either burned or buried with proper rites the soul was not free to continue its upward progress.

*The Rattling of Chains.*

There is a story told by Pliny the younger of a house at Athens in which nobody could live, from its being haunted. At length the philosopher Athenadorus took it; and the first night he was there he seems to have comported himself very courageously and sensibly. He sent his servants to bed, and set himself seriously to work with his writing materials, determined that fancy should not be left free to play him false. For some time all was still, and his mind was wholly engaged in his labours when he heard a sound like the rattling of chains—which was the sound which had frightened everybody out of the house; but Athenadorus closed his ears, kept his thoughts collected, and wrote on, without lifting up his eyes.

The noise, however, increased; it approached the door; it entered the room; then he looked round, and beheld the figure of an old man, lean, haggard, and dirty, with dishevelled hair, and a long beard, who held up his fingers and beckoned him. Athenadorus made a gesture with his own hand in return, signifying that he should wait, and went on with his writing. Then the figure advanced and shook his chains over the philosopher's head.

On looking up he saw him beckoning as before; whereupon he arose and followed him. The apparition walked slowly, as if obstructed by his chains, and having conducted him to a certain spot in the court, which separated the two divisions of an ancient Greek house, he suddenly disappeared. Athenadorus gathered together some grass and leaves in order to mark the place, and the next day he recommended the authorities to dig there, which they did, and found the skeleton of a human being encircled with chains. It being taken up, and the rites of sepulture duly performed, the house was no longer disturbed.

It is interesting to notice that the unfortunate man, having been bound in chains during his earth-life, imagines himself still to be so after his death, and that his thought of them is sufficiently strong, not only to weigh him down and to cramp his movements, but also to produce the impression of a clanking sound upon the minds of others.

In the following story the same desire for burial seems to be prominent, though here it was probably complicated by other motives. It is given to us by Dr. Lee in his *Glimpses of the Supernatural*, vol. ii, p. 61, and he assures us that, though the tale has been told in various forms, the version given below is from those who are thoroughly competent to furnish a true and faithful account of a very impressive narrative.

*The Australian Grazier.*

"In Australia, about twenty-five years ago, two graziers, who had emigrated from England, and entered into partnership, became possessed of considerable property. One of them all of a sudden was missed and could nowhere be found.

"One evening, about three weeks afterwards, his part-

ner and companion was returning to his hut along a by-path which skirted a deep and broad sheet of water. The shadows of twilight were deepening, and the setting sun was almost shut out by the tall shrubs, brushwood, and rank grass which grew so wild. In a moment he saw the crouching figure of his companion, apparently as real and life-like as could be, sitting on the ground by the very margin of the deep pond, with his left arm bent, resting on his left knee. He was about to rush forward and speak, when the figure seemed to grow less distinct, and the ashen-coloured face wore an unusually sad and melancholy aspect; so he paused. On this the figure, becoming again more palpable, raised its right arm, and holding down the index finger of the right hand, pointed to a dark and deep hole where the water was still and black, immediately beside an overhanging tree. This action was deliberately done, and then twice repeated, after which the figure, growing more and more indistinct, seemed to fade away.

"The next morning the pool was dragged, and the body of his partner discovered, in the very spot towards which the finger of the phantom had twice pointed. It had been weighted down by a large stone, attached to the body, while from the same spot was recovered a sort of axe or hatchet, with which the murder had evidently been committed. This was identified as having belonged to a certain adventurer, who, on being taxed and formally charged with the murder, and found to be possessed of certain valuable documents belonging to the murdered man, eventually confessed his crime, and was executed."

Here we may reasonably infer the presence of other thoughts in the mind of the dead man in addition to the desire that his body should be buried. He probably wished to set at rest the uncertainty in the mind of his partner

as to his fate; it is possible (since he may very likely have been a man of no very advanced development) that he was also actuated by a craving for revenge upon his murderer. This latter feeling has been the cause of a number of apparitions; the celebrated case at Chester-le-Street may be recollected, in which the murdered woman showed herself several times to the miller, and threatened to continue to do so until he denounced the murderer, which he was at last forced to do.

In many cases the dead, realizing now with clearer sight their own shortcomings, and perhaps finding themselves seriously limited by them, have returned to request the prayers of the living. Several of such cases are described by Mrs. Crowe in *The Seeress of Prevorst*, and in *The Night Side of Nature* the same authoress gives at length an account of an interesting one which occurred in the prison at Weinsberg, and also another at Neckarsteinach, where the ghost was that of a rich timber-merchant of that town, whose relations were so much scandalized by the prayers for him (which he had requested should be offered in public) that they actually prosecuted for defamation of character the man who had seen the apparition.

A recent case is mentioned in the *Proceedings of the Psychical Research Society*, p. 93, in which a man who had earnestly desired an interview with a clergyman, but had been unable to obtain it, showed himself to the clergyman after death, though without explaining what he wanted.

### *A Ghost in the Sunlight.*

The story is told by the Rev. Gerald Louis, of St. Paul's Vicarage, Margate. He says:

"It was a hot and bright afternoon in summer, and

as if it were only yesterday, I remember perfectly well walking down the broad bright street in the bright afternoon. I had to pass the house of P. I remarked, indeed, that all his window-blinds were drawn carefully down, as if to screen his furniture (of which his wife was inordinately proud) from the despoiling rays of the afternoon sun. I smiled inwardly at the thought. I then left the road and stepped upon the side pavement, and looked over the area rails into the front court below. A young man dressed in dark clothes and without a hat, and apparently about twenty, was standing at the door beneath the front steps. On the instant, from his likeness to my friend P., I seemed to recognize his son. We both stood and looked very hard at each other. Suddenly, however, he advanced to that part of the area which was immediately below where I was standing, fixed on me a wide, dilated, winkless sort of stare, and halted. The desire to speak was evidently legible on his face, though nothing audible escaped his lips. But his eyes spoke, every feature of his face spoke—spoke as it were, in silent language, in which reproach and pain seemed to be equally intermingled. At first I was startled, then I began to feel angry. ‘Why,’ I said to myself, ‘does he look at me in that manner?’ I then pursued my way and thought no more of what had occurred.

“On Wednesday it was my turn to officiate at the local cemetery, and, to my surprise, I had to bury Mr. P.’s son. I lost no time in calling upon Mr. P. and his wife. I found the latter at home, and what she had to say only made me more uncomfortable still. James Henry P. died terribly in earnest, wishing in vain to the last that I would come, on the Thursday before the Sunday on which I had seen him. He had died, too, in the front room on a level with the area into which its window opened.

He had also lain there until the Wednesday following awaiting burial. His corpse then was lying in that very room on the very Sunday, and at the very moment, too, that I had seen his living likeness, as it were, in the area outside."

It must have been something more than desire for ministerial consolation which moved this young man; surely he must have had some secret to disclose, perhaps some misdeed to confess, some indiscretion for which atonement was needed. His desire to see the priest was strong enough to cause the apparition, yet it would seem that in showing himself his power was exhausted, and he was unable to speak. Or *would* he perhaps have spoken if the clergyman had understood, and had waited for him and encouraged him to try to explain himself? We shall never know.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THOSE DESIRING TO ATONE.

The desire to confess or atone in some way for a wrong done very frequently holds a man down in close connection with earth-life, sometimes for many years. Here is a case in point, in which compunction for a small theft seems to have held a person back for some thirty years :

#### *Remorse for a Theft.*

A certain Miss V., while staying at her aunt's house, was much alarmed one night by the figure of a neat, elderly woman, apparently an upper servant, who came and leaned over her bed, seemed to make an earnest but unavailing effort to speak to her, and then vanished.

Some months later she was staying with a friend who was making some experiments in spiritualism, and she sat with her several times. On one of these occasions an (alleged) spirit announced itself as Sarah Clarke, a name unknown to both ladies. The communication was to the effect that she had been, many years before, house-keeper in the family of Miss V.'s aunt; that she had endeavoured unsuccessfully to communicate directly with Miss V. when that young lady visited the old mansion; that her object was to confess a criminal act of which she had been guilty and to ask her old mistress's pardon for it. A restless desire to do so (she added) had caused her to haunt the room she occupied when on earth. She then proceeded to say that she had been tempted to steal and hide away several small pieces of family plate, including



a silver sugar-bowl and a few other articles which she enumerated; and that she would be very thankful if Miss V. would tell her aunt this, and express her (Sarah's) great sorrow for what she had done, and her hope for pardon.

The next time Miss V. visited her aunt she asked her if she had ever known a person named Sarah Clarke.

"Certainly," she replied, "she was housekeeper in our family some thirty or forty years since."

"What sort of person was she?"

"A good, careful, tidy woman."

"Did you lose any silver articles while she was with you, aunt?"

The lady reflected. "Yes, I believe we did; a sugar basin and a few other things disappeared in a mysterious way. Why do you ask?"

"Did you ever suspect Sarah of taking them?"

"No; of course she had access to them; but we considered her far too trustworthy to be guilty of theft."

Then Miss V. related the message she and her friend had received, and, on comparing notes, it was found that the list of articles, as given by Sarah to the two ladies, corresponded to the things actually lost, so far as the aunt could recollect. What that lady thought of her niece's story I know not; all she said was that, if Sarah had taken the things, she most freely forgave it. The remarkable point in this story remains to be told. From that time forth, the haunted chamber was free from all disturbance. Sarah Clarke never again appeared to any of its occupants.

"Knowing the standing of the parties, I am able to vouch for the truth of this story," says Mr. R. D. Owen, from whose book, *The Debatable Land*, p. 226, the above account is abridged. So far as we see, Sarah Clarke made

no attempt to restore the stolen goods; indeed, that may very probably have been impossible after so long an interval of time. She simply desired to relieve her uneasy conscience by confessing her fault, and receiving the forgiveness of the mistress whom she had robbed.

In our next instance the transgression was of a very different nature—the breach of a sacred trust, the consequence of which might have been of such a nature that the man who had committed it felt compelled to keep a ceaseless watch of eighty years simply in order to be at hand to make any effort that lay within his power to prevent possible evil results. I give this story precisely as it was told to me years ago by one who vouched for its accuracy:

### *The Hidden Confession.*

It appears that our friend had accepted an invitation to dinner at a certain country house. Happening to arrive somewhat earlier than usual, he found, on being shown into the drawing room, that the hostess was not yet down, the only occupant of the room being a Roman Catholic priest—a complete stranger to him—who was seated upon a sofa intently reading a large book. As our friend entered the priest raised his eyes, made him a courteous but silent bow, and again resumed his reading. He was a strongly built, active-looking man—apparently rather a muscular Christian; but there was in his face an expression of weariness and anxiety that attracted our friend's attention, and he wondered much within himself who he could be and how he came to be invited to that house. Soon other guests appeared, and the hostess came down so full of apologies for not being in readiness to receive her guest on his arrival, that the questions he had intended to ask about the stranger priest were forgotten

for the time. When seated next to his hostess at the dinner-table, however, they recurred to his memory, and turning to her he remarked :

"By the way, you did not introduce me to that interesting looking priest whom I found in the drawing room ; who is he?"

Then, looking along the table, he continued with some surprise : "He does not seem to have come in to dinner."

A very strange look passed over the hostess's face as she said hurriedly, almost in a whisper : "What, did you actually see him, then?"

"Certainly I did," replied he, "but I beg your pardon ; I fear I have unintentionally mentioned a subject which is unpleasant to you—perhaps intruded upon some family secret. I had no idea but that the priest was a simple guest here, like myself, and his appearance interested me so much that I wished to ask for an introduction ; but if you are anxious for some reason that his presence here should be concealed, I need hardly assure you that you may depend upon my silence."

"No, no, my lord," answered the hostess still in a low tone, "you misunderstand me entirely ; there is nothing which I wish to conceal, though this is a subject which my husband does not like to have mentioned. I was surprised to hear that the priest had shown himself to you, because until now this has never happened except to a member of our family. What you saw was no visitor, but an apparition."

"An apparition?" ejaculated our friend.

"Yes," continued the hostess, "and one whose supernatural character it is impossible to doubt, for during the two years we have lived in this house it has shown itself perhaps a dozen times to my husband and myself under circumstances in which either self-deception or imposi-

tion were quite out of the question. Since we cannot explain it, and are well assured that it is due to no natural causes, we have decided not to speak of it to any one. But since you have seen it—my lord, will you do me a favour?"

"Most certainly, if it be within my power," replied he.

"I have often thought," she resumed, "that if any one could be found who had the courage to address it, we might perhaps be relieved from its presence. Can you—will you—make some trivial excuse for going back into the drawing-room for a few minutes, see if the priest be still there, and, if he be, speak to him—adjure him to depart from this house—exorcise him, in fact?"

After some hesitation our friend agreed to make the proposed experiment. His whispered conversation with the hostess having been apparently unobserved, he excused himself to her in a louder tone for a few moments' absence, and left the room, waving back the servant who would have attended him. It was with a strange thrill of awe that, on entering the drawing-room, he perceived the figure of the priest still seated in the same spot—still diligently perusing his great breviary, if such it was; but with unshaken resolution he walked slowly forward, and stood directly in front of the apparition. As before, the priest greeted him with a courteous inclination of the head, but this time instead of immediately returning to the book his eyes rested, with a look of infinite weariness, and yet with a kind of suppressed eagerness also, upon our friend's face. After a moment's pause, the peer said slowly and solemnly:

"In the name of God, who are you and what do you want?"

The apparition closed its book, rose from its seat,

stood confronting him, and, after a slight hesitation, spoke in a low but clear and measured voice.

"I have never been so adjured before; I will tell you who I am and what I want. . . . As you see, I am a priest of the Catholic Church; and, eighty years ago, this house in which we now stand was mine. I was a good rider, and was extremely fond of hunting when opportunity offered; and one day I was just about to start for the neighbouring meet, when a young lady of very high family indeed called upon me for the purpose of making a confession. What she said of course I may not repeat, but it affected very closely the honour of one of the noblest houses of England; and it appeared to me of such supreme importance that (there being certain complications in the case) I committed the grave indiscretion—the sin even, for it is strictly forbidden by our Church—of making notes of the confession as I heard it. When I had absolved and dismissed her I found that it was only barely possible for me to reach the *rendezvous* in time, but even in my haste I did not forget the supreme importance of guarding carefully my notes of the terrible secret just committed to me. For purposes which I need not now detail, I had had a few bricks loosened in the wall of one of the lower passages of this house and a small recess made—just the place, I thought, in which my notes would be perfectly safe from any conceivable accident until my return, when I intended to master the intricacies of the case at my leisure, and then at once destroy the dangerous paper. Meantime I hurriedly shut it between the leaves of the book I had held in my hand, ran downstairs, thrust the book into the recess, replaced the bricks, sprang upon my horse, and rode off at full speed.

"That day in the hunting field I was thrown from my horse and killed on the spot; and ever since it has

been my dreary fate to haunt this earthly home of mine and try to avert the consequences of my sin—try to guard from any possibility of discovery the fatal notes, which I so rashly and wrongly made. Never until now has any human being dared to speak to me boldly as you have done; never until now has there seemed aught of help for me or hope of deliverance from this weary task, but now—will you save me? If I show you where my book is hidden, will you swear by all that you hold most sacred to destroy the paper that it contains without reading it—without letting any human eye see even one word of its contents? Will you pledge your word to do this?”

“I pledge my word to obey your wish to the letter,” said our friend with solemnity.

The gaze of the priest’s eyes was so intense that they seemed to pierce his very soul, but apparently the result of the scrutiny was satisfactory, for the phantom turned away with a deep sigh of relief, saying, “Then, follow me.”

With a strange sense of unreality he found himself following the apparition down the broad staircase to the ground floor, and then down a narrower one of stone that seemed to lead down to some cellars or vaults. Suddenly the priest stopped and turned towards him.

“This is the place,” he said, placing his hand on the wall; “remove this plaster, loosen the bricks, and you will find behind them the recess of which I spoke. Mark the spot well, and—remember your promise.”

Following the pointing hand and the apparent wish of the spectre, our friend closely examined the wall at the spot indicated and then turned to the priest to ask another question; but to his intense astonishment there was no one there—he was absolutely alone in the dimly-lighted passage! Perhaps he ought to have been pre-

pared for this sudden disappearance, but it startled him more than he cared to admit, even to himself; he hurried up the stairs, and presented himself, still breathless with the surprise, in the dining-room.

His prolonged absence had caused some comment, and now his agitated appearance excited general attention. Unable for the moment to speak coherently, his only answer to the earnest questions of his host was a sign which referred him to the hostess for explanation. With some hesitation she confessed the errand upon which her request had despatched him, and, as may easily be imagined the intensest interest and excitement were at once created. As soon as he had recovered his voice, he found himself compelled to relate the story before the entire party, concealment now being out of the question.

Celebrated as was his eloquence, it is probable that no speech he ever made was followed with closer attention than this; and at its conclusion there was no voice to oppose the unanimous demand that a mason be at once sent for to break down the wall and search for confirmation of this weird yet dramatically circumstantial tale. After a very short delay the man arrived, and the whole company trooped eagerly downstairs under our friend's guidance to watch the result of his labours. The peer could hardly repress a shudder as he found himself once more in the passage where his ghostly companion had vanished so unceremoniously; but he indicated the exact spot which had been pointed out to him, and the mason began to work upon it forthwith.

"The plaster seems very hard and firm," remarked some one.

"Yes," replied the host, "it is of excellent quality, and comparatively new; these vaults had been long disused, I am told, until my predecessor had the old brickwork

repaired and plastered over only a few years ago."

By this time the mason had succeeded in breaking away the plaster and loosening a brick or two at the point indicated, and though perhaps no one was actually surprised, yet there was a very perceptible stir of excitement among the guests when he announced the existence of a cupboard or cavity about two feet square and eighteen inches deep in the thickness of the wall. The host pressed forward to look in, but, instantly recollecting himself, drew back and made way for our friend, saying:

"I was forgetting your promise for the moment; to you alone belongs the right of the first investigation here."

Pale, but collected, our friend stepped up to the cavity and after one glance put in his hand and drew forth a heavily bound old-fashioned book, thickly covered with dust or mould. A thrill ran through the assembled guests at the sight; but no words broke the silence of awe-stricken expectation while he reverently opened the volume, and, after turning over a few leaves, drew from between the pages a piece of writing paper—yellow with age, on which were some irregular, hastily-written lines. As soon as he was certain that he had found what he sought, he averted his eyes from it, and, the others falling back to make way for him, bore it carefully up the stairs and into the nearest room and cast it reverently into the fire burning on the hearth, almost as though he were laying a sacred offering upon some ancient Zoroastrian altar. Until the last scrap of the mysteriously found document was reduced to tinder, no one spoke; and even then, though a few disjointed exclamations of "Marvellous! wonderful indeed! who could have believed it?" broke forth, the majority were far too deeply impressed for words. Our friend felt that none who were present on



that occasion could ever forget its lessons—he himself least of all, and indeed he could never tell the story, even after years had passed, without the profoundest emotion. The figure of the priest, he added, was never seen again in the house where he had so long guarded his guilty secret.

We can readily realize what that priest's feelings must have been when the accident threw him suddenly out of the physical plane, and he knew that he would be unable to repair the consequences of his indiscretion. An added difficulty was that the very nature of his secret was such that there was scarcely anyone to whom he could trust it; and he must have had perpetual anxiety lest it should be discovered by the wrong person, while he was waiting for the right one to whom he could confide its destruction. His difficulty was a very real one.

The next case we shall consider is also that of a priest, but in his case the misdemeanour was of a different character—apparently the selfish neglect of a duty. This left behind it no consequences on the physical plane requiring his vigilance, but the remorse which he felt seems to have led him to impose upon himself a certain penance—or quite possibly it may have been imposed upon him by some other dead priest, for when he realized his sin his natural instinct would be to confess and seek absolution in the usual way, just as much on the astral plane as on the physical. The story was related by Charles Corre, of Penvénau, in 1885, and is quoted from Mrs. A. E. Whitehead's *Dealings with the Dead*, p. 147.

*A Dead Priest's Mass.*

“My grandfather, old Chatton, was returning one evening from Paimpal, where he had gone to receive some payments. It was on Christmas Eve. All day long it

had snowed, and the road was quite white, and the fields and boundaries were white also. Fearing to lose his way in the snow, my grandfather walked his horse.

"When he reached the old ruined chapel which stands by the wayside, he heard midnight strike. Thereupon came a tinkling of bells, as if for Mass.

"Is it possible?" thought my grandfather; 'the Chapel of St. Christopher must have been restored. I did not notice it this morning as I went past; certainly I was not paying much attention.'

"The bells chimed on. He determined to go and see what was going on. The Chapel looked new and beautiful in the moonbeams, and it was lighted up with torches whose bright rays shone through the windows. My grandfather Chatton tied his horse to a gate at hand, and entered the church of the Saint. It was full of people, and they were all extraordinarily absorbed in prayer. There was not even the noise of coughing, which continually breaks the silence of a church. The old man knelt down on the flagstones at the entrance to the church.

"The priest was at the altar. His server passed to and fro within the sanctuary. My grandfather said to himself, 'So, after all, I shall hear midnight Mass!' And he began to pray, as he always did, for the relations he had lost. The priest turned towards the people to give a blessing, and my grandfather noticed the strange brightness of his eyes. And strange to say, those eyes appeared to single him out amongst the crowd, and to fix themselves upon him. He felt rather uncomfortable.

"The priest having taken a Host from the Ciborium, held it between his fingers, and said in a hollow voice, 'Is there anyone here who can *receive*?' No one answered. Three times over the priest repeated his ques-

tion. The same silence in the congregation. Then my grandfather rose. He was indignant at seeing all these people apparently indifferent to the priest's appeal.

"'On my word as a Christian, reverend sir,' he exclaimed, 'I went to confession this morning before starting, intending to communicate tomorrow, being Christmas Day. But if you desire it, I am ready at once to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The priest instantly descended the altar steps, while my grandfather made his way through the crowd to kneel at the rails.

"'May my blessing rest upon you, Chatton,' said the priest when my grandfather had received the Host. 'Once on a Christmas Eve, a snowy night like this, I refused to go and bear the viaticum to a dying person. That was three hundred years ago. I could not be delivered from purgatory until one of the living should consent to receive Communion from my hand. Thanks to you I shall now be released.'

"As soon as he had ceased to speak the torches went out. My grandfather found himself alone in the ruined building with no roof but the sky, amid the rushes and nettles that grew in the deserted nave. He had some difficulty in getting through them, but he mounted his horse and went on his way."

This story finds its place in this chapter as an example of an apparition seeking to atone for neglect while on earth, but it might also claim a position elsewhere on our list as a case in which a dead man employs extensive accessories to aid in his purpose. The restored aspect of the ruined chapel (which had probably been the scene of his ministrations during earth-life) the congregation, the lights, may all have been simply creations of the old priest's long-concentrated thought. These may all have

been materializations, which would have been visible to any one who had passed by; but this is improbable, nor is it at all necessary to suppose it. It may equally well have been that the force of the priest's will exerted a mesmeric effect upon Chatton, and for the time opened his consciousness to this much of astral life. Very probably the congregation were not mere thought-forms, but dead and devoted Catholics who perhaps knew of the vow or penance of the priest, and were aiding him by the power of their combined thought and earnest good wishes. If that be so, the extensive supply of accessories would be readily explicable.

Another curious point is the suddenness of his release. As soon as his penance was performed, he felt himself free; and it is very probable that he was in reality free as far as the lower astral sub-planes were concerned. For many years it must have been only the power of his own will to execute the prescribed penance which held him on those lower levels. The moment that that will to remain was changed into the expectation of departure, the grosser part of the vehicle would instantly dissolve, and he would find his consciousness functioning upon higher levels. Experience has shown that when a man is not far from the change of consciousness from one sub-plane to another, any violent shock of feeling may precipitate that change; and no doubt that will have been so in this case. Three hundred years is a most abnormally long time to spend upon the astral plane, even to carry out an imaginary penance, and it is of course possible that the priest may have mistaken the length of his purgatory; though if he considered himself able to celebrate his expiatory mass only once a year, and that on midnight on Christmas Eve, he may well have had a good many years to wait for a living auditor.

But the most dramatic story of all of a man who returns from the dead in order to atone for a crime committed during earth-life is that of Sir Ralph Fernleigh, which I related in the *Theosophist* for February and March, 1886. It is far too long to reproduce here; but it narrates how a man, who had deeply wronged someone during life, found his action weighing heavily upon his conscience at the time of his death. Being imprisoned under very terrible circumstances he committed suicide in order to escape slow starvation, leaving behind him written directions that whoever should find certain treasure of his might have it and use it, on the condition that he set apart a certain portion of it to right as far as might be the wrongs which now troubled him so sorely. After death he hovered about for many years until he was able to lead some one whom he felt that he could trust to the discovery of his treasure and the burial of his bones. The names in that story are fictitious, because the characters concerned are still living; but I know the story to be true, and I have personally examined the evidence in the case.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE EARTH-BOUND.

Those of whom we have written in the last chapter are only one subdivision of a class of the dead who seem to be definitely held down to earth by their anxiety—earth-bound, as it used to be called; as St. Martin put it, they are remainers, not returners, and are unable thoroughly to tear themselves away from physical matter until some business is settled in which they have a special interest. A very different illustration of a case of this nature is given in *Invisible Helpers* (p. 83)—that of the father who had left two little children unprovided for, and could think of nothing else until arrangements had been made for them. This was happily accomplished by the aid of one of the helpers, and the dead father, now no longer anxious, passed rejoicing on his upward way. Others sometimes show themselves for motives which seem to us somewhat inadequate, even though estimable.

#### *Mrs. Webb.*

For example, I have heard that a house at Barby, a small village in Northamptonshire, was for a considerable time haunted by a certain Mrs. Webb, who had been noted while living for her miserly habits. It was conjectured that her appearances might in some way be connected with money which she had concealed, and a prolonged search was eventually rewarded by the discovery of her hoard in a garret. Even then, however, her visits to the neighbouring villagers did

not cease, and it presently occurred to her friends that she might perhaps have left some debts unpaid. On investigation this was found to be the case, and as soon as these were all paid, the apparition was seen no more.

*Three Shillings and Tenpence.*

Another instance of this praiseworthy desire to put earthly matters straight before retiring to higher spheres is related by Dr. Edward Binns in his *Anatomy of Sleep* (p. 462), and he remarks of it that "perhaps there is not a better-authenticated case on record." The story is that a Presbyterian woman in Perth called upon a Catholic priest, telling him that she had been desired to do so by an apparition which troubled her every night, and gave her no rest. This tiresome visitant had instructed her that she should find a priest and ask him to pay for her a debt of three shillings and tenpence, which was much upon her conscience. She omitted, however, to explain to whom she owed this sum, but the priest after some trouble and enquiry found a certain grocer, with whom the deceased had dealt, and asked him if a woman named Maloy—the name the ghost had given—owed him anything. The tradesman, who was unaware of her death, turned up his books, and found that the sum of three and tenpence was still outstanding against her. The priest paid the debt, and the Presbyterian woman was no more troubled.

Of course one cannot but admire the anxiety to discharge honourably any debt, however small, though it would seem that a woman who was so particular about her accounts might have given more precise indications as to where the money was owing. Also one does not see exactly on what grounds the Catholic

priest was called upon to pay the debt of a woman who was not even known to him! But even in the physical life, people are not always entirely rational in their expectations. Occasionally the person who returns (or remains) wishes not to discharge a debt, but to collect one, and to have it paid to his heirs.

In *The Book of the Boudoir*, by Lady Morgan, London, 1829, vol. i, pp. 123-125, the talented authoress tells us how the following occurrence was related to her by Thomas, Lord Erskine.

*The Earl of Buchan's Butler.*

"When I was a very young man, I had been for some time absent from Scotland. On the morning of my arrival in Edinburgh, as I was descending the steps of a close on coming out from a bookseller's shop, I met our old family butler. He looked greatly changed, pale, wan, and shadowy as a ghost. 'Eh? old boy,' said I, 'what brings you here?' He replied: 'To meet your honour, and solicit your interference with my lord, to recover a sum due to me, which the steward at the last settlement did not pay.'

"Struck by his looks and manner, I bade him follow me to the bookseller's, into whose shop I stepped back; but when I turned round to speak to him, he had vanished.

"I remembered that his wife carried on some little trade in the Old Town. I remembered even the house and flat she occupied, which I had often visited in my boyhood. Having made it out, I found the old woman in widow's mourning. Her husband had been dead for some months, and had told her, on his death-bed, that my father's steward had wronged him of some



money, and that when Master Tom returned, he would see her righted.

"This I promised to do, and shortly after I fulfilled my promise."

The butler was probably moved less by care about the small amount of money than by affection for his wife and desire to help her in her poverty, so this is perhaps a case of return in order to help those left behind. Money does seem, however, frequently to cause trouble after death to those who have possessed it, especially if they have hoarded it, as did Mrs. Webb of Barby, whom I have already mentioned. Here is another very similar case:—

*A Dead Miser.*

"Many a time in the dusk of the evening have the neighbouring peasants met an old wrinkled woman, dressed in ancient garb, passing along the gloomy road which leads across the Lumb, but fear always prevented them from speaking. She never lifted her head, but helped herself noiselessly along by means of a crooked stick, which bore no resemblance to those then in use. At times she was seen in the old barn, on other occasions in the house, but more frequently in the orchard, standing by an apple tree which still flourished over the place where the buried treasure was afterwards said to have been found. Generations passed away, and still her visits continued. One informant minutely described her withered visage, her short quaintly-cut gown, her striped petticoat, and her stick. He was so much alarmed that he ran away from the place, notwithstanding that he had engaged to perform some urgent work. 'She was not there,' he gravely said, 'when I went to pluck an apple, but

no sooner did I raise my hand toward the fruit, than she made her appearance just before me.' At last, it is said, an occupier of the farm, when somewhat elated by liquor, ventured to question her as to the reason of her visits. She returned no answer, but, after moving slowly towards the stump of an old apple-tree, she pointed significantly towards a portion of the orchard which had never been disturbed. On search being made the treasure was found deep down in the earth, and as the soil was being removed, the venerable-looking shade was seen standing on the edge of the trench. When the last jar was lifted out, an unearthly smile passed over her withered features; her bodily form became less and less distinct, until at last it disappeared altogether, and since then the old farm-house has ceased to be haunted."

This case is reported in *The Haunted Homes and Family Traditions of Great Britain*, by John H. Ingram, p. 578. It is in some respects curious, for we do not gather that the grim old lady had left any debts unpaid, nor had she, as far as can be seen, any special wishes as to the disposal of her hoard. It would almost seem as though she was unquiet only because through her fault so much money was lying useless, and her desire was simply that it should be discovered (no matter by whom) and once more put into circulation.

#### *A Merited Retribution.*

Sometimes the dead man is prevented from resting, not by a praiseworthy anxiety to pay his debts, but by an unsatisfied desire for revenge. A painful case of this kind is related in *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World*, p. 326. It was that of an English officer who had seduced and abandoned a young woman in

Canada, and was for more than ten years the victim of a most remarkable persecution from the inner world. The woman had died, but she haunted him with constant raps and knocks, with a whirlwind of sound and discomfort which left him no single night of peace. Wherever he was, at home, in camp, in lodgings, abroad or in his own country, any light he kept in his room was sure to be extinguished. If a caged bird were in his room, it was certain to be found dead in the morning. If he had a dog with him in the bedroom, it would rush away as soon as released, and would never come near him again. He was at length obliged by this persistent haunting to leave the army and retire upon half-pay; but even then, wherever he lived the annoyance was so great that he was quickly obliged to remove.

Obviously here is a case of karma working itself out immediately and through the medium of the evil passions of the person wronged, and while one cannot but feel that the lesson for the officer was salutary and well-deserved, the Theosophist will regret the blindness of the unfortunate woman who, while the instrument of justice in one sense, was undoubtedly laying up much future suffering for herself by her vindictive pursuit of the man who had wronged her.

*A Disappointed Lover.*

Another case of persecution, less persistent, but also less merited, is given in the same volume, p. 318. It seems that a certain French actress had many admirers, among whom was a young man upon whom she looked with some favour. On closer acquaintance with him, however, she discovered traits in him which rendered him unsuitable as a candidate for her hand,

so she dismissed his suit—not at all unkindly, so far as can be seen from the story, of which, however, we have only the actress's side, since it is extracted from her autobiography. The young man died very shortly afterwards, still in anger against the actress, declaring with his last breath that he would haunt her after death for as long a period as he had known her during life.

Thereafter, every night at eleven o'clock (that being apparently the hour of his death) a terrible cry rang out wherever she happened to be, frightening her, and also many others who heard it on various occasions, almost to distraction. After some months of this annoyance it was replaced by the even more disconcerting phenomenon of a musket-shot in her immediate neighbourhood exactly at that hour; and this manifestation continued nightly for three months, in spite of the utmost efforts of the Paris police to discover its cause and prevent it. Further disturbances followed, and in one form or another they lasted exactly two years and a half after the young man's death—precisely the duration of their acquaintanceship in his lifetime.

Both of these are instances of the carrying out of a system of prolonged annoyance or persecution in revenge for wrongs, real or fancied; and there are two possible explanations for them. To suppose them cases of actual haunting is to endow the dead people concerned with a sustained malignancy and a petty spite which seems scarcely human or credible; yet after all we do sometimes find in earth-life examples of malevolence as persistent and unreasoning, and for the story of the English officer at any rate this explanation is perhaps the most probable.

The alternative would be the construction of a thought-form or artificial elemental which would carry

out the persecution automatically; and the type of disturbance described in the case of the French actress would probably be most easily produced in that way. A thought of phenomenal energy and concentration, whether it be a blessing or a curse, calls into being an elemental which is practically a living storage-battery with a kind of clock-work attachment. It can be arranged to discharge itself regularly at a certain hour daily, or upon a certain anniversary, or its discharge may be contingent upon certain occurrences, as in the case of the family death-warning described in *The Astral Plane*, p. 94.

A sufficiently strong wish—a concentrated effort of intense love or envenomed hate—would create such an entity once for all, an entity which would then be quite disconnected from its creator, and would carry on its appointed work entirely irrespective of later intentions and desire on his part. No after repentance of his could recall it or prevent its action, any more than repentance will recall a stone which has been thrown or a bullet which has been discharged from a rifle; but one whose uncontrolled passion has betrayed him into an outburst of anger which has generated an evil wish can to a considerable extent neutralize its power for ill by sending after it an army of good and loving thoughts whose tendency will be exactly the reverse of its own.

On the other hand, if the man does not repent, but still retains his rancorous feelings, it is possible for him to feed and reinforce his virulent thought-form, and thus either continue or vary its malignant action. All of this might take place, and as a matter of fact constantly is taking place, without any comprehension of practical magic or any knowledge of elemental essence

on the part of the creator; his strong rush of feeling does the work, and sets in motion the machinery in obedience to eternal laws of which as yet he does not even dream. Yet he knows well that the bitter thought of hatred is a wicked thought, to which he ought not to yield, and so he is responsible for the effect, even though he is totally ignorant of the manner of its production.

The most terrible example which I have yet encountered of the persistence of hatred beyond the grave is the case of Tom Price, which I described in *The Theosophist* for November, 1885. An engine-driver, who died full of jealous rage against his rival in the affections of a young woman, retained the feeling so strongly that he materialized himself and contrived an accident in which the rival was killed. So extreme an instance as this is happily very rare, though there are some in which a murdered man has in vengeance dogged the murderer to his doom.

The depressing and saddening effect upon the dead which is often produced by the selfish and uncontrolled grief of the survivors has already been described; and there are several instances on record in which the dead have reappeared to complain of this. One of the most interesting of these, because of the quaint and picturesque symbolism employed by the dead woman, is given below:

*Weep Not for the Dead.*

"Once upon a time a young girl lived at Coray, who had lately lost her mother, and who could not be consoled. Day and night she did nothing but weep. One evening she remained kneeling in the confessional until midnight. She threw aside the curtain and looked out

into the church, and this is what she saw. A procession of the dead came along the middle of the nave towards the sanctuary. They all went with strangely soft and silent footsteps, making no sound any more than do the clouds crossing the sky on a still summer day.

"One soul, however, the last in the procession, seemed to drag herself along painfully, bent down with the heavy weight of a bucket which she carried, filled to overflowing with water which looked black and unpleasant. The girl recognized her mother, and was struck by the expression of displeasure which appeared on her face.

"Having returned home she began to weep more than ever, feeling certain that her mother was unhappy in the other world. She was puzzled about that bucket of black water. At daybreak she went to speak to the old rector.

"‘Return this evening to your post,’ replied the priest; ‘perchance you will be enlightened on the matter.’ . . .

"At midnight, once again, the souls passed along silently, as on the previous night. The girl watched them through the opening of the curtain of the confessional where she knelt. Her mother came, as before, the last of all. This time she was nearly bent double, for instead of a single bucket she had two to carry. She staggered under the burden, and her face was dark with pain and care.

"Seeing this, the girl could not resist addressing the dead woman. ‘Mother!’ she cried, ‘Mother, why do you look so sad and grieved?’

"Hardly had she spoken when her mother rushed towards her, and exclaimed: ‘Why do I look sad? Unhappy girl, when will you give over weeping for me?’

These two buckets are filled with your tears, and if you do not cease to shed them I shall have to drag them along until the day of judgment! Remember that the dead should not be wept. If souls are happy, tears disturb their bliss. If they are not yet in heaven, their progress is delayed. If they are lost, the tears shed for them come down upon them as a fiery rain, adding to their torments and increasing their regret.'

"Thus spoke the dead woman.

"When on the following day the girl repeated these words to the rector, he asked her: 'Have you wept since that, my child?'

" 'Indeed, no, and I will weep no more in future.'

" 'Return, in that case, to-night to the church. I think you will find cause for rejoicing.'

"The young girl did indeed rejoice, for her mother was walking at the head of the procession of departed souls, her face bright and shining with the joy of heaven."

This story was related by Madame Hostion, of Quimper, in 1889, and may be found in Mrs. A. E. Whitehead's *Dealings with the Dead*, p. 158.

It is quaint in its symbology and very characteristic of the simple directness of Breton belief on these subjects. Neither the daughter nor the priest expresses the slightest surprise that the dead should still continue to attend church, nor that they should be visible to mortal eyes. The immediate presence of those who have put off the physical body, and the fact that, in whatever state they may be, they are still near enough to us to be powerfully affected by our grief, are taken simply as matters of course. Mrs. Whitehead's comment on this story is, "The belief is widespread in Brittany that our sorrow increases the suf-



fering of those we have lost. It finds expression in many stories and legends." (*Ibid.*, p. 162.) Many valuable truths which have been lost by those who think themselves far wiser and more intelligent are enshrined in the hearts of these simple folk.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### HAUNTINGS.

We have already cited some examples of the manner in which neglect or crime will induce a dead man to show himself in the effort to atone for what he has done, or to rectify his error as far as possible. But there are many cases in which a crime is irreparable, and no rectification or atonement is possible; nevertheless, in these also the criminal seems frequently to be drawn back to the scene of his wicked action by the working of remorse and self-reproach.

#### *An Erring Minister.*

A typical case of the return of a dead man to the scene of any special crime which he has committed is contained in Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's *Historical Memoirs of My Own Time* (pp. 218-226). The story, as told to the worthy baronet, contains more detail than I have space for; but, briefly, it is the narrative of the experience of a clergyman who, on taking possession of a new living, finds the ghost of his predecessor still haunting his bedroom. "It being broad daylight," he says, "I beheld the figure of a man, habited in a loose gown, standing at a sort of reading-desk, on which lay a large book, the leaves of which he seemed to turn over at intervals. On each side of him stood a little boy, in whose face he looked earnestly from time to time; and as he looked, he seemed always to heave a deep sigh. At length the man closed the book, and then taking the two children, one in each hand, he led them slowly across the room. My eyes eagerly fol-

lowed him until the three figures disappeared behind an iron stove which stood in the furthest corner of the apartment." On seeing the portrait of his immediate predecessor, he at once recognized it as that of his visitor. On making enquiries he discovered that though the late priest had been much loved by his parishioners, there were yet some unpleasant reports in circulation to the effect that he had formed a connection with a young woman, by whom he had two sons. The sexton, who repeated this scandal, thought little of it, but admitted that he had himself seen two little boys of about four or five years old at the parsonage. They suddenly disappeared, however, some time before the decease of their supposed father, and it was commonly believed that the father himself died of a broken heart. This tale seemed to correspond to some extent with what had been seen, but the apparition did not reappear, and the effect it had produced had somewhat worn off before the winter approached. An effort was then made to light the stove behind which it had vanished, but it smoked intolerably, and emitted a most offensive smell. The blacksmith who was sent for to attend to it discovered in the inside at the farthest extremity the bones of two small human bodies, corresponding in size with the description given by the sexton, and also with the apparition. Upon this confirmation of the reality of his visitor our clerical friend took alarm, resigned the living and promptly quitted the place; though why he should have feared a predecessor whose visit had been such a quiet and harmless one, is not clear.

*The Unquiet Squire.*

Dr. Lee, in his *Sights and Shadows* (p. 49), gives us a personal experience of his own which illustrates this

type of haunting. He relates how in the year 1880 he was staying at a country rectory, and was awakened in the middle of the night by a curious feeling of oppression. "Suddenly," he says, "I saw a figure, the outline of which seemed not very distinct, gliding by an unusual kind of moving undulation round the bed. Having reached one side, the form, which was darkish grey in colour, and covered with a flowing gauze-like cloak, turned sharply and glided back with a like movement to the other side of the bed. For a while I watched it, following it with my wide-open eyes steadily, round the room and back again. Its movements were regular, monotonous and weird. I could clearly distinguish head, shoulders and arms, but no features with any distinctness. Seizing a match-box, I struck a match and lit the bed-candle. Still the form kept gliding round and back again as before. I followed it steadily and regularly. Its undulatory movements seldom varied, and its dark-grey colour never altered. But in the course of two or three minutes it began to appear less distinct. The dark shades of its form and the whole outline grew less dark, and in the course of several minutes it by degrees altogether vanished away." The explanation of this apparition was forthcoming some time afterwards. It seems that sixty years before an old squire had murdered a blackmailer in that very room, and had ever since haunted the scene of his hasty act. He had been seen by several others who had slept in that room, always wandering round and round the bed exactly as described by the doctor.

The inquietude produced by the unavailing regret, the gnawing of an ever-present remorse that cannot for an instant be forgotten, are well illustrated in the restless wandering of this man after so many years.

Sometimes the family ghost is of this type, though in others he may be only a thought-form or a strong astral impression, and without personally making his acquaintance it is often exceedingly difficult to classify him accurately. Here, for example, is a case given in Harland's *Lancashire Legends*, which might be of either of these types:

"Tradition says that once every year a spectre horseman visits Wyecoller Hall. He is attired in the costume of the early Stuart period, and the trappings of his horse are of the most uncouth description. The horseman can be heard dashing up the road at full speed, and, after crossing the narrow bridge, he suddenly stops at the door of the Hall. The rider then dismounts and makes his way up the broad oaken stairs into one of the rooms of the house. Dreadful screams, as from a woman, are then heard, which soon subside into groans. The horseman then makes his appearance at the door, at once mounts his steed, and gallops off along the road by which he came.

"The tradition is that one of the Cunliffes murdered his wife in that room, and that the spectre horseman is the ghost of the murderer, who is doomed to pay an annual visit to the home of his victim."

It is possible that the local theory may be correct, and that this wretched criminal may really have persuaded himself, or been persuaded, that it is a necessary part of his expiation that he should thus reproduce each year the details of his atrocious deed; but it is surely on the whole more probable that the scene is a vivid impression made upon astral matter by the terrible passions which must have raged in the hearts both of the murderer and his victim. In a later chapter we shall examine some unmistakable instances of this type of

astral impression, but in this case we have scarcely sufficient particulars to enable us to decide with certainty the category to which the phenomenon belongs.

The restlessness produced by an unquiet conscience sometimes manifests itself along quite different lines. Instead of annually rehearsing the crime, it keeps up a constant disturbance of more or less marked character at the spot where it was committed. This is one of the causes of what are commonly called hauntings, though there are also various other ways in which they may be produced. These hauntings are of many and varied kinds, from the mere unaccountable noises, up through the movement of small objects without physical contact, to definite apparitions—who in some cases make their field of operations almost uninhabitable for men still in the flesh either by deafening uproar, by constant interference, or by obvious ill-will.

Some such manifestations are intentionally produced by the dead for this very purpose; for in some cases they still feel a property in a house or a room, and seem strongly to object to its occupation by any one else. Occasionally these demonstrations are definite efforts to be avenged upon certain people, but sometimes also they are apparently quite unintentionally produced. The dead are uneasy, they feel miserable or injured, and under the influence of these feelings their unquiet minds create all kinds of curious disturbances, often quite involuntarily to themselves. Sometimes they really want something and are anxious to attract attention, but their efforts to communicate are clumsy and blundering, for they are as yet entirely unfamiliar with the methods and possibilities of the astral plane. There are examples in which the entity responsible for the so-called haunting has long passed away from the

neighbourhood of earth-life, but has left (perhaps quite unconsciously) a thought-form strong enough to cause some of the milder manifestations to continue for many a year. Let us examine a few stories illustrative of these various classes of phenomena.

Major Moor, the well-known author of *The Hindu Pantheon*, published in the appendix to his pamphlet on the subject of the Bealings Bells a lengthy account of the hauntings at Ewshott House, in the parish of Crondall, in Hampshire, from which the following is extracted:

*Ewshott House.*

"In the dead of night, when every member of the family has gone to bed, and there is no imaginable cause to be assigned for them, a succession of distinct and heavy blows are heard, as of some massive instrument upon a hollow wall or floor. These sounds are seldom heard more than once in the night, and generally between the hours of twelve and two. They are sometimes so loud as to awaken one from sleep, and startle even those who are the most familiar with them; at other times almost inaudible; sometimes struck with great rapidity, at other times more slowly and leisurely; varying in duration also in about the same degree. But whether in his noisier or more gentle movements, the ghost is so peculiar in his sound as not to be easily mistaken by those who have once heard him. No one has been able to determine from what part the sound proceeds, nor indeed to say with certainty that it is within the house at all.

"Considerable pains have been taken, at different times, to ascertain whence the sounds proceed, with a hope of finding some sufficient cause for them, but en-

tirely without success; and, after about twenty years, we are as entirely in the dark as ever. The length of time it has been heard, the fact of every domestic of the family having been often changed during the time, and the pains that have been taken to investigate the matter, while every member of the family, except the watcher, has been in bed, have put the possibility of any trick out of the question; and have no less convinced the inmates that it cannot be accounted for on any of the usual suppositions."

*Disturbances at Sampford.*

The Rev. Caleb C. Colton, in a rare pamphlet called *Narrative of the Sampford Ghost*, gives an account of a case in which the haunting seems to have been of a somewhat more vicious character than the preceding. Terrific noises seem to have been heard here also, but various people received blows from an invisible hand, which in some cases left considerable bruises and swellings. These occurrences took place in a house in the village of Sampford Peverell, near Tiverton, in the county of Devon.

*Continuous Hauntings.*

In *Real Ghost Stories* (pp. 261-289), full and detailed accounts are given of two of the most remarkable cases of continued hauntings on record. They are those of Willington Mill, in Northumberland, and of Brook House, which is described vaguely as being near a favourite watering-place on the south-east coast. They have many features in common—the constant inexplicable sounds, the movement of all sorts of objects without any visible reason, the occasional apparition of figures, the striking of blows by unseen entities, etc. They



differ in no way from the others that I have quoted, except that the manifestations are full and varied, and that both are known to have lasted through many decades. At Willington the influences which produce the phenomena are apparently dying out, as the disturbances have been much less violent of late years. In neither case is there any tradition which explains what happens, so none can say what strange record of undiscovered crime stands at the back of this persistent haunting.

*The Poltergeist.*

A very curious variant of this—a kind of parody upon the real haunting—is found in that class of phenomena which the Germans attribute to the Poltergeist. Usually this is a merely temporary display of mischief, though sometimes a good deal of malice enters into it, and it is often a serious matter enough for the unfortunate victim. Occasionally it takes the form of bell-ringing; more often of stone-throwing, and of the moving and breaking of all kinds of small objects. Such performances must always involve a partial materialization, at least as far down as etheric matter, for the articles which are thrown or carried about are usually moved by a hand which, though invisible to us, is nevertheless materialized to a certain extent, as will be later explained in our chapters on spiritualism.

Consequently in the majority of cases such phenomena can take place only in the presence of a mediumistic person. The fact that this was observed has often led to the unjust accusation of trickery on the part of such persons, the average ignoramus being entirely unable to comprehend how circumstances which occur only in the presence of a certain person can be

independent of that person's volition. There may, however, be any one of several different causes at work when such phenomena are produced. Undoubtedly in some cases malice is involved, and the performance is of the nature of a persecution; in others it appears to be intended as a kind of practical joke. There are people in physical life at a stage of evolution where they appear to consider it amusing to frighten or to injure others, where they seem to find some occult personal enjoyment in knocking another man's hat over his eyes, in upsetting cold water down his back, or in damaging something which they suppose to be particularly valuable to him. Incomprehensible as this attitude may be to any reasonable person, there is absolutely no doubt of the fact that it exists; and we must remember that the idiot who finds such procedure amusing during his earth-life is not rendered any more sane after death. If he is only unfortunate enough to discover how to accomplish a very slight partial materialization, he has then unequalled opportunities for the exhibition of his peculiar idea of humour; and it is he who is usually responsible for outbursts of Poltergeist phenomena.

Sometimes, however, a playful nature-spirit, belonging to one of the lower orders, and imitative exactly as a monkey is, will see such an exhibition of folly, and then go about attempting to reproduce it on his own account. Or sometimes a nature-spirit has been offended by some exhibition of man's vandalism and destructiveness, and he revenges himself by making matters unpleasant for awhile. Also, as we said of the other hauntings, so it is true of this class also, that it may sometimes be unintentionally produced by clumsy efforts on the part of well-meaning dead people; but in this case the phenomena are very rarely of a destruc-

tive character. Let us take our first example of the proceedings of the Poltergeist from the columns of a newspaper. The consternation of the reporter, his utter lack of comprehension of what was happening, and his eager assurance that he would never have believed it if he had not seen it himself, are all very amusing.

*Mischief at Worksop.*

"The town of Worksop was in an uproar on Saturday (March 3rd, 1883), consequent on the circulation of a report that the household goods of a man named Joseph White, a well-known dealer, were being smashed and removed by some unseen agency. All day long crowds of excited people wended their way towards the New Building Ground, where White's semi-detached house stands, drawn thither by the exaggerated accounts of the mysterious occurrences said to have been witnessed by the inmates and others. . . . As I entered the door I myself saw an Oxford frame slip out of the rocking chair. I told the boy to pick it up, and he said he dare not. After hearing what the folks had to say, I was joining in the conversation, when a basin which had stood on the meal-bin suddenly began to rise in a slanting direction over my head and then fell at my feet, smashing into bits. I cannot account for what I saw. No one was nearer to the basin than myself, and as far as I saw there was no cause for the phenomenon.

"The room was dimly lighted by a candle. . . . We were talking about the things, and the doctor was saying, 'It's a very mysterious thing,' with his back turned to the flour-bin, when a basin which stood on the bin suddenly flew up slantingly over the doctor's head, to where some bacon was hanging on some hooks, and

fell straight down and smashed at his feet. ~ About half a dozen persons were in the room whilst these things happened. As far as I saw, no human agency caused the articles to move and knock about. . . . White and I went in; I followed him into the front room; he called my attention to the bare walls, saying that everything except the clock and a stuffed pigeon in a glass case, which remained on their respective nails, had been dashed to the ground and broken.

“The clock hung over the bed, which was right up in the corner of the room, with the head and one side close to the walls. While White was telling me that the chest of drawers before us had been turned topsy-turvy, we heard a smash, and on turning my head I saw the clock in the middle of the floor, with its end knocked out. It had cleared the bed, and was nearer the fireplace on the opposite side of the room. I was the nearest person to the clock when it hung on the wall. The servant girl opened the door of the room, and came inside just as the clock left the wall. If White or the servant had been instrumental in throwing the clock down, I could not have failed to detect them.

“We went back into the kitchen, and as I stood looking towards the fire, with the girl on my left hand, engaged in some household duty, and White on my right hand, I saw a pot-dog ornament, such as you see in old people’s houses, smash on the floor in front of me. It had come off the mantelpiece, but I did not see it leave the mantelpiece. The things seemed to fly like lightning, and you only knew that they were gone when you saw them broken on the floor. Then I saw a cream-jug, which had stood on the table, jump to the floor and smash. I cannot account for the occurrences; and if I had not seen for myself I should not have be-

lieved the removal of articles could have taken place in the way it did."

The above account is abridged from *The Retford, Worksof and Gainsborough News* of March 10th, 1883. It is only a sample of many other similar stories, for the same thing has occurred in many countries and at widely separated periods of time.

#### *Other Examples.*

A fine example occurred at Stockwell in 1772, and is described in great detail and with all sorts of attestations in a contemporaneous pamphlet called *An Authentic, Candid and Circumstantial Narrative of the Astonishing Transactions at Stockwell*. The phenomena were of the usual description; plates and glasses were thrown down and broken, pewter dishes and brass candlesticks danced about, a pier-glass was shattered, and pandemonium reigned for some twenty hours in a quiet suburban domicile. Though no one touched these falling objects, it was observed that the phenomena took place only in the presence of a maid-servant, and after her discharge quietude was restored—she very evidently having been what we should now call the medium for the manifestations. The same sort of thing happened about the middle of last century in Moscow Road, Bayswater; indeed, instances have occurred in many countries and under the most diverse conditions.

#### *Stone-Throwing.*

In the year 1838, a circumstance of the same kind occurred in Paris, in the Rue St. Honoré, and not very long ago there was one in Caithness, in which most unaccountable circumstances transpired. Amongst the rest, stones were flung, which never hit people, but fell at their feet, in rooms perfectly closed on all sides.

*The Persecution of a Professor.*

Then there is the famous story of the Drummer of Tedworth; and the persecution of Professor Schuppart, at Giessen, in Upper Hesse, which continued with occasional intermission for six years. This affair began with a violent knocking at the door one night; next day stones were sent whizzing through closed rooms in all directions, so that, although no one was struck, the windows were all broken; and no sooner were new panes put in, than they were broken again. The professor was persecuted with slaps on the face by day and by night, so that he could get no rest; and when two persons were appointed by the authorities to sit by his bed to watch him, they got the slaps also. When he was reading at his desk, his lamp would suddenly rise up and remove to the other end of the room—not as if thrown, but evidently carried; his books were torn to pieces and thrown at his feet, and when he was lecturing this mischievous sprite would tear out the leaf he was reading; and the only thing that seemed available, as a protection, was a drawn sword brandished over his head by himself, or others, which was one of the singularities attending the case of the Drummer of Tedworth. Schuppart narrated all these circumstances in his public lectures, and nobody ever disputed the facts. The story may be found in Mrs. Crowe's *Night Side of Nature* (pp. 429 and 430).

These last are undoubted cases of intentional persecution. In the case of the Drummer of Tedworth the agent was understood to be a living man, who had threatened Mr. Mompesson, though, so far as I recollect, the drummer never admitted it. In the Professor's case there is nothing to show whether the author

of the disturbance was living or dead, or what was the reason for the persecution; probably the Professor himself may have known, but if so he remained silent. The mention of the effect of the sword is very significant, and shows clearly that a materialization was involved, as a purely astral entity would have no fear of a physical weapon.

### *Bell-Ringing.*

Sometimes Poltergeist manifestations are accompanied by an epidemic of bell-ringing in the house, and there are other cases in which the bell-ringing occurs alone. The classical example of this phenomenon is, of course, that which took place in 1834 at the village of Great Bealings, near Woodbridge, Suffolk. The account of it is given to us by Major Moor, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and the author of *The Hindu Pantheon*, in a remarkable but little-known book entitled *Bealings Bells*. He describes how for fifty-three days the bells in his house were rung at frequent intervals without any visible agency. Having abundantly satisfied himself that trickery was impossible, he wrote to the newspapers explaining his remarkable case, and asking whether any light could be thrown upon it by any of his readers. He received no explanation, but he learnt that he was not singular in his experience, for his communication brought him no less than fourteen letters, each containing examples of mysterious bell-ringing, every one of them completely baffling all explanation, all of comparatively recent date, and most of them attested by the signatures of those who witnessed them, with permission to give their names to the public. In one of these cases the disturbances continued for eighteen months, but in another only two hours and a half.

Mr. R. D. Owen mentions a similar case in *The Debatable Land* (p. 241), in which the offending bells were wrapped up in cloth and tied with string, but nevertheless rang themselves loose from everything, pealing more violently than before, and eventually broke away from the wall and fell, still ringing, to the floor! In *Real Ghost Stories* will be found another almost exactly similar story, but occurring as recently as 1891. In this case additional phenomena took place—lights being extinguished, and some clothes being mischievously thrown into a bath.



## CHAPTER XX.

### APPARENTLY AIMLESS APPARITIONS.

Hitherto we have dealt with apparitions who seem to have a recognizable motive; but we must not forget the existence of a very large class whose manifestations have no adequate purpose that we can discover.

#### *Monsieur Bach's Spinet.*

A very interesting story, from various points of view, is the celebrated one of Monsieur Bach's spinet, related by Mr. R. D. Owen in his *Debatable Land* (p. 325). Monsieur N. G. Bach, the great-grandson of the celebrated composer, purchased in 1865 a very fine old spinet, upon which he found the date of 1564. During the succeeding night he dreamt that a handsome young man appeared to him, who claimed to have been the owner of the spinet, which had been given to him by his master, King Henry III of France. Furthermore, he mentioned a certain air composed by the King, which he played over for M. Bach, and told him he would take means to recall it to his recollection.

M. Bach awoke, full of the pathos of the air, and found that it was just two o'clock. He soon fell asleep again, and had no further dream; but when he woke in the morning, he found to his intense surprise a sheet of music on his bed, containing the words and music of the air which he had heard in his dream, written not in the notation of the present day, but exactly in the style of the bygone age to which the alleged composer belonged! Whether his visitor had written this, or

whether his own hand had been guided in sleep to write in a style unknown to him during his waking hours, he knows not; but there was the music—a rare archæological specimen.

Some weeks later he was impelled to take up a pencil, and a communication, purporting to come from his previous visitor, was written through his hand. It told him that in a certain part of this old spinet he might find a card in the handwriting of the King, containing a verse which he quoted, referring to the gift of the instrument. On waking, M. Bach immediately searched for the card, and found it exactly where he had been directed to look.

Though the substance of what was written upon it corresponded exactly with the account given through his hand by automatic writing, yet the quotation was by no means literally accurate; and thus the evidence was in reality far stronger than it would have been if the words had been exactly reproduced. Much interest was excited at the time in Paris by this extraordinary sequence of events, which was in no way concealed, but openly discussed by M. Bach's many friends, and found its way into the newspapers. The music was published, and is still obtainable—at least, I myself bought a copy only a few years ago.

This has very much the air of being merely a friendly visit to one of similar tastes, exactly such as the young musician might have paid to a kindred spirit while in the physical body. So far as we can see, no great purpose was served, either for the dead man or for Monsieur Bach, by this communication from the unseen world, though of course it provides a very interesting and indisputably authenticated case for the psychical student; and it is even conceivable that *that* may in

reality have been its object! The young musician's stay upon the astral plane must have been abnormally long if it was indeed he who communicated, as there seems every reason to suppose. Yet this, though very unusual, is not absolutely impossible, if we take into account that he seems to have been a light and pleasure-loving young fellow, probably without any special religious feeling or high aspiration.

On the other hand, we must never forget, in considering such cases as this, how absolutely easy it would be for any astral entity to see clairvoyantly or psychometrically all the details of the history of that spinet, take an appropriate form, and impress the whole upon the mind of Monsieur Bach. It would be an exceedingly congenial task for any lover of music to bring to the notice of the modern world so pretty and pathetic an air, and at the same time greatly to delight and interest the possessor of that valuable and beautiful instrument. It would be a graceful act, readily performed without trouble to the actor, and we may well imagine a dead man asking himself why he should not do it, or still more probably, doing it without thinking specially about it at all. Some may say that that would be deceit, and therefore a wicked thing to do; yet since we tolerate here the actor who plays a part, and even look upon him as an artist and a public benefactor, why should we regard him differently when he happens to be dead? At least we might give him credit for good intentions, even if we do not agree with his methods.

Here is an instance of apparently purposeless manifestation on the part of a young lady who had left her physical body nine years before. It is one of the cases investigated by the Society for Psychical Research, but

I extract this account of it from Mr. Andrew Lang's *Dreams and Ghosts* (p. 74).

*The Scratch on the Face.*

"In 1867, Miss G., aged eighteen, died suddenly of cholera in St. Louis. In 1876 a brother, F. G., who was much attached to her, had done a good day's business in St. Joseph. He was sending in his orders to his employers (he is a commercial traveller) and was smoking a cigar, when he became conscious that some one was sitting on his left, with one arm on the table. It was his dead sister. He sprang up to embrace her (for even on meeting a stranger whom we take for a dead friend, we never realize the impossibility in the half-moment of surprise), but she was gone. Mr. G. stood there, the ink wet in his pen, the cigar lighted in his hand, the name of his sister on his lips. He had noted her expression, features, dress, the kindness of her eyes, the glow of the complexion, and what he had never seen before, a bright red scratch on the right side of her face.

"Mr. G. took the next train home to St. Louis, and told the story to his parents. His father was inclined to ridicule him, but his mother nearly fainted. When she could control herself, she said that, unknown to any one, she had accidentally scratched the face of the dead, apparently with the pin of her brooch, while arranging something about the corpse. She had obliterated the scratch with powder, and had kept the fact to herself. 'She told me she, at least, knew that I had seen my sister.' A few weeks later Mrs. G. died."

Statement by Mr. F. G., confirmed by his father and brother, who were present when he told his tale first, in St. Louis. *S. P. R. Proceedings*, vol. vi, p. 17.

From that same book of Mr. Andrew Lang's a few pages earlier, I extract a very fine and well-authenticated story, though here also there seems no special purpose in the coming of the apparition.

*General Barter's Story.*

In 1854, General Barter, C. B., was a subaltern in the 75th Regiment, and was doing duty at the hill station of Murree in the Punjaub. He lived in a house built recently by a Lieutenant B., who died, as researches at the War Office prove, at Peshawur on 2nd January, 1854. The house was on a spur of the hill, three or four hundred yards under the only road, with which it communicated by a bridle-path, never used by horsemen. That path ended in a precipice; a footpath led into the bridle-path from Mr. Barter's house.

One evening Mr. Barter had a visit from a Mr. and Mrs. Deane, who stayed till near eleven o'clock. There was a full moon, and Mr. Barter walked to the bridle-path with his friends, who climbed it to join the road. He loitered with two dogs, smoking a cigar, and just as he turned to go home he heard a horse's hoofs coming down the bridle-path. At a bend of the path a tall hat came into view, then round the corner the wearer of the hat, who rode a pony and was attended by two native grooms. "At this time the two dogs came, and, crouching at my side, gave low, frightened whimpers. The moon was at the full, a tropical moon, so bright that you could see to read a newspaper by its light, and I saw the party above me advance as plainly as if it were noonday; they were above me some eight or ten feet on the bridle-road." . . . The rider was in full dinner dress, with white waistcoat and a tall chimney-pot hat, and he sat on a powerful hill pony (dark brown, with

black mane and tail), in a listless sort of way, the reins hanging loosely from both hands. Grooms led the pony and supported the rider. Mr. Barter, knowing that there was no place that they could go to but his own house, cried, "Who is it? What do you want here?" The group halted, the rider gathered up the reins with both hands, and, turning, showed Mr. Barter the known features of the late Lieutenant B. He was very pale, the face was a dead man's face, he was stouter than when Mr. Barter knew him, and he wore a dark Newgate fringe.

Mr. Barter dashed up the bank, the earth thrown up in making the bridle-path crumbled under him, he fell, scrambled on, reached the bridle-path where the group had stopped, and found nobody. Mr. Barter ran up the path for a hundred yards, as nobody could go *down* except over a precipice, and neither heard nor saw anything. His dogs did not accompany him.

Next day Mr. Barter gently led his friend Deane to talk of Lieutenant B., who said that the Lieutenant "grew very bloated before his death, and while on the sick list he allowed the fringe to grow in spite of all we could say to him, and I believe he was buried with it."

Mr. Barter then asked where he got the pony, describing it minutely.

"He bought him at Peshawur, and killed him one day, riding in his reckless fashion down the hill to Trete."

Mr. Barter and his wife often heard the horse's hoofs later, though he doubts if any one but B. had ever ridden the bridle-path.

This story was written by General Barter on the 28th of April, 1888, for the S. P. R. It was corroborated by Mrs. Barter and Mr. Stewart, to whom Gen-

eral Barter told his adventure at the time. The facts that the dead man had changed considerably since Mr. Barter saw him in life, and that the pony also had never before been seen by him, add greatly to its interest and value. We have, of course, no definite proof of the objectivity of the apparition, but the probabilities are much in its favour, since we have no reason to suppose that Lieutenant B. had any object in impressing himself upon his successor, even if he had the power to do so. The Lieutenant very likely thought strongly of himself as riding down the bridle-path to his old home, as he must so often have done during earth-life; perhaps, having been apparently a somewhat dissipated man, he even found the astral life dull, and wished himself back in the earlier part of his existence; and this thought or wish was powerful enough to make a materialization which could affect both the senses of sight and hearing. The same, probably, is the clue to the previous narrative of the young lady at St. Joseph; she saw her brother, and her strong affection for him induced her to wish very ardently to sit beside him just as during life; and since in higher planes thought has great facility in moulding matter, she was able either to impress herself clearly upon his mind, or to materialize for just that fraction of a second which was necessary to become visible to him.

The most remarkable feature in General Barter's story is the wealth of accessories which the Lieutenant seems to have had at his command. To materialize two grooms and a pony in addition to oneself is no mean feat, though it could be done; but I think we are hardly called upon to suppose that this was what happened. If the whole affair was a subjective vision, it would be just as easy to impress the accessories upon

the General's mind as the single figure; and this may be the true explanation. On the other hand, the pony at least was dead, and may therefore very well have been there, especially if he happened to be at all attached to the master who used him so carelessly; but there is no evidence that the grooms were dead, too. Still, if the Lieutenant had always been attended by them, in thinking of himself as riding, he would be sure to supply their familiar figures, and the probability is that we must give him credit for at least that part of the spectacle; though it is also true that in a country like India, there would be plenty of dead grooms about, whom he would find little difficulty in impressing temporarily into his service if he wished.

. *A Materialized Dog-Cart.*

Another very curious instance of this power to produce quite considerable accessories is given by Dr. Lee in *Glimpses of the Supernatural*, vol. ii, p. 73. He there relates how two persons, a well-known Oxford man who was curate of the parish, and the widow of a Bristol merchant, saw in the afternoon of a bright autumnal day, a dog-cart containing three men drive along a lane past the garden in which they were standing. The man who sat behind in the dog-cart half rose, and waved his hand to the lady, who recognized him immediately as her son, who was an officer in the army in India. Rushing at once to meet the dog-cart, she was stupefied to find that there was no vehicle of any kind in sight, and that the whole thing was simply an apparition. Some weeks after the news arrived from India that the son had died on that same day, though at a rather earlier hour.

It is difficult to see the necessity, for the dead man's



purpose, of the dog-cart and the other two (unrecognized) men. The most probable explanation is that the dead man thought of himself as having been wounded and driving home with the assistance of two friends; still the thought-force required must have been considerable, for in this case it seems certain that a materialization took place, since the whole was simultaneously visible to two persons. It is always possible that the two strangers were dead friends, whom the son thought of bringing home with him as visitors. At any rate, this is not an objectless apparition, for it served the purpose of preparing the mother for the news of the son's death, though it seems doubtful whether he intended this, as there was nothing in the appearance or accessories to indicate it. It is most likely simply one of the cases of the action of strong thought, and the thought was probably chiefly of his own return.

There are occasions on record in which ghosts seem to resent intrusion. A remarkable instance of an unprovoked attack by an apparition is given in *Real Ghost Stories* (p. 210). The narrative, which was signed by Mr. James Durham as lately as December 5th, 1890, is as follows:

*A Belligerent Apparition.*

"I was night watchman at the old Darlington and Stockton Station at the town of Darlington. One night during winter and about twelve o'clock or twelve-thirty, I was feeling rather cold with standing here and there; I said to myself, 'I will away down and get something to eat.' There was a porters' cellar where a fire was kept on, and a coal-house was connected with it. So I went down the steps, took off my overcoat, and had just sat down on the bench opposite the fire,

and turned up the gas, when a strange man came out of the coal-house, followed by a big black retriever. As soon as he entered my eye was upon him and his eye upon me, and we were intently watching each other as he moved on to the front of the fire. There he stood looking at me, and a curious smile came over his countenance. He had a stand-up collar and a cutaway coat with gilt buttons and a Scotch cap.

"All at once he struck at me and I had the impression that he hit me. I up with my fist and struck back at him. My fist seemed to go through him and struck against the stone above the fireplace, and knocked the skin off my knuckles. The man seemed to be struck back into the fire, and uttered a strange, unearthly squeak. Immediately the dog gripped me by the calf of my leg, and seemed to cause me pain. The man recovered his position, called off the dog with a sort of click of his tongue, then went back into the coal-house, followed by the dog. I lighted my dark lantern, and looked in the coal-house, but there was neither dog nor man, and no outlet for them except the one by which they had entered. . . .

"A number of years before a man who had been employed in the office of the station had committed suicide and his body had been carried into this very cellar. I knew nothing of this circumstance, nor of the body of the man, but Mr. Pease and others who had known him told me my description exactly corresponded to his appearance and the way he dressed, and also that he had a black retriever just like the one which gripped me. I should add that no mark or effect remained on the spot where I seemed to be seized."

This story has several points of interest. Instances

of direct attack by a dead man, especially in this unprovoked way, are very rare. The effect of the return blow seems to show conclusively that in this case also we have to deal with a partial materialization, for though the fist passed through the man and struck the wall behind him, it also knocked him backwards, while it would have had absolutely no effect upon him if he had been employing the astral vehicle. The strange, unearthly squeak is also evidence of imperfect materialization. Every frequenter of séances knows how thin and squeaky the direct voice can sometimes be before the materialization is fully completed; and no doubt a tradition of the same underlies the remark of the poet that "the sheeted dead did squeak and gibber in the streets of Rome."

The dog is another interesting feature, though here again there is no evidence to show whether he was merely an accessory or a ghost on his own account. The rush and the bite that left no mark might have happened in either case. Animals not infrequently enter into stories of apparitions, and are most commonly merely thought-forms or impressions in astral matter. But genuine animal ghosts certainly do sometimes show themselves, as indeed we might naturally expect that they would. The animal has an astral body, which survives the death of his physical form, and he inhabits it for a certain time—much shorter, of course, than the human astral life, but still of appreciable length. During this time domestic pets have frequently shown themselves to those whom they love or manifested their presence in their well-known haunts. Witness the following narrative:

*Peter.*

"A naval officer visited a friend in the country. Several men were sitting round the smoking-room fire when he arrived, and a fox-terrier was with them. Presently the heavy, shambling footsteps of an old dog, and the metallic shaking sound of his collar, were heard coming upstairs.

" 'Here's old Peter!' said the visitor.

" 'Peter's dead!' whispered his owner.

"The sounds passed through the closed door, heard by all; they pattered into the room; the fox-terrier bristled up, growled, and pursued a viewless object across the carpet; from the hearth-rug sounded a shake, a jingle of a collar and the settling weight of a body collapsing into repose."

Mr. Andrew Lang, who gives it in *Dreams and Ghosts* (p. 156), tells us that this story was received in a letter from a lieutenant on one of Her Majesty's gunboats. I have myself seen clearly on several occasions a "dead" pet animal in his astral body, just as I have frequently seen him in that astral body during his hours of sleep in his earth-life. On one occasion during life the same animal rendered himself both audible and palpable to one of our members (whom he knew well) in a foreign country, hundreds of miles from where he lay asleep in his physical body.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### LESS FREQUENT TYPES.

#### *A Floating Head.*

The partial materialization which produces a floating head seems to be not uncommon. A rather ghastly case of it is related by the Rev. H. Elwyn Thomas. He was walking one summer evening near Llangynidr, in South Wales, after having concluded his evening service. He states that it was at about twenty minutes to nine, but still light enough to see a good distance. The crisis of the story is best told in his own words:

“Turning round, I saw within half a yard of me, and almost on a level with my own face, that of an old man, over every feature of which the putty-coloured skin was drawn tightly, except the forehead, which was lined with deep wrinkles. The lips were extremely thin, and appeared perfectly bloodless. The toothless mouth stood half open. The cheeks were hollow and sunken like those of a corpse, and the eyes, which seemed far back in the middle of the head, were unnaturally luminous and piercing. This terrible object was wrapped in two bands of yellow calico, one of which was drawn under the chin and over the cheeks and tied at the top of the head; the other was drawn round the top of the wrinkled forehead, and fastened at the back of the head. . . .

“Acting on the impulse of the moment, I ran away from the horrible vision with all my might for about sixty yards. I then stopped, and turned round to see how far I

had distanced it, and, to my unspeakable horror, there it was still face to face with me, as though I had not moved an inch. I could see nothing between the face and the ground, except an irregular column of intense darkness, through which my umbrella went as a stick goes through water." Mr. Thomas again ran away for a short distance, but soon pulled up and turned to face the apparition. It then receded before him, and moved quickly down the road until it reached the churchyard wall, which it crossed, and disappeared at a certain spot which he specially remarked. His description of this gruesome vision was instantly recognized by his host as that of an old recluse who had died fifteen years previously. This man had lived in a cottage close to the place where he first appeared to Mr. Thomas, and had been buried at the spot in the churchyard at which he vanished. The detailed narrative will be found in *Real Ghost Stories* (p. 200).

Except for the unusual and unprepossessing face and headgear, this would seem to be quite an ordinary ghost—one which need hardly have terrified the worthy minister so excessively. It may be that the man wanted help or advice of some kind which he thought Mr. Thomas would be able to give—at least this seems to be suggested by the manner in which he followed him. Or he may simply have been drifting idly about his old haunts, and may have shown himself in obedience to a momentary impulse—a desire perhaps for the companionship of a man on that physical plane which had once been so familiar to him—of whose material pleasures he possibly still thought longingly.

On p. 153 of the same book we find another story of a floating head, decidedly more horrible and less

readily explicable. Mr. Stead states that he received the account from a lady at Brockley:

*A Non-Human Apparition.*

"One Saturday evening last summer, about eight, I was alone in the house, with the exception of my two little boys (of eight and nine years), who were at that moment in the bath. I left them for a minute and, closing the bathroom door, walked along the short corridor to the head of the stairs, thinking of the article for which I was going down. I raised my eyes and saw to my great surprise a peculiar light about six feet from the stair in the corner, five inches or six inches above me, and facing me. My first act was to look in every direction for a possible reflection, but in vain. There was no light in the house, the meter being turned off; the corner was a very light one, with a lofty ceiling.

"I looked again at the light, watching it intently, and in less time than it takes me to write it, I saw this light develope into a head and face of yellowish-green light, with a mass of matted hair above it. The face was very wide and broad, larger than ours in all respects, very large eyes of green, which, not being distinctly outlined, appeared to merge into the yellow of the cheeks; no hair whatever on the lower part of the face, and nothing to be seen below. The expression of the face was diabolically malignant, and as it gazed straight at me my horror was intense as my wonder, but I was not nervous in the least; the thought darted through my mind that Gustave Doré had drawn his originals from such. Keeping my gaze fixed on the thing, I said to it, 'In the name of Christ, be gone,' and the fiendish thing faded from my sight, and has not troubled me since."

The lady who sends in this account to Mr. Stead takes care to discount beforehand such explanations as might be offered by the crudely sceptical. She remarks, "I am not troubled with liver complaint, and never had a bilious attack in my life. I am also a member of a temperance association, and am generally considered strong-minded." Certainly she seems to have faced her apparition more calmly than Mr. Thomas did, though both in itself and in its possibilities it was far more terrible than his.

As to the explanation of such an appearance, I can see only two lines along which it may lie. This was certainly not a human being, but it may have been a thought-form—perchance a creation of the very artist whose work it suggested to the lady. But if that were so, how it came to be there, how and why it gained the power to show itself to the lady, or she gained the power to see it—all these points remain veiled in mystery, questions to which with the information at our command we can give no answer. Nevertheless, the thought-form is the most probable hypothesis. The alternative is to suppose the creature a living entity of a certain non-human evolution whose members do not under ordinary circumstances come into contact with man at all—are not intended to do so, in fact. In Atlantis this was well known and the most horrible abuses resulted from it; even in classical times some tradition of it still remained, and the man who had rashly intruded upon its domain was spoken of as "having seen the great god Pan." But the barriers which separate us from it are wisely erected, and only disaster awaits him who tries to break through them. The description has about it a strong suggestion of that evolution; yet it is difficult to assign any reason for such an apparition



suddenly intruding itself casually into a peaceful suburban dwelling. Most probably it was only a thought-form, but it must have been a striking one. It seems a pity that she did not await its further development before so vigorously adjuring it to depart; there are many members of the Psychical Research Society who would give a good deal to have seen that head!

. *Unpleasant Persistence.*

If a person happens to be somewhat mediumistic he is sometimes haunted by a dead man who for some reason or other wishes to communicate with the physical world, and, if it is not understood, such haunting may become very troublesome in the persistence of the pathetic effort to attract attention. Often the dead are unable to achieve more than raps, heavier knockings, or whispering voices and rustlings; but there are also many cases in which they succeed in materializing a hand strong enough to give a firm, decided clasp, and even to exert considerable strength. Those who attend séances are especially liable to be thus haunted. The "spirit guides," as they are called—that is to say, the dead men taking charge of a séance—usually and quite rightly exclude from it those whose object in trying to reach back into earth-life is wholly selfish or improper. But though they may defend their medium from such people, it is impossible for them to exercise similar supervision over all the visitors to their séance. Thus sometimes undesirable men who have endeavoured to utilize the medium, but have been rejected, will attach themselves to some mediumistic sitter, hoping by persistent worrying to gain through him the opportunities which have very properly been denied to them by the "guides." A striking story which probably belongs to this class is

to be found in *Dreams and Ghosts* (p. 296), and Mr. Lang assures us that "the whole of the strange experience described is given in the words of the narrator."

*The Dogs and the Hand.*

"After three or four séances Bolter used to be very nervous and unwilling to sleep alone, so once I went with him to his one-roomed hut. We turned into the same bed. I was wakened later by a noise and movement in the room. Found the door open; the full moon streaming in, making light like day, and the place full of great big black dogs—well, anyhow, there were four or five! They were romping about, seemingly playing. One jumped on the bed, another rubbed his muzzle on mine! (The bed was low and I slept outside.) Now, I never had anything but love for dogs of any kind, and as —*n'est-ce-pas?*—love casts out fear, I simply got up, turned them all out, shut the door, and turned in again myself. Of course my idea was that they were flesh and blood, and I allude to physical fear.

"I slept, but was anew awakened by a ghastly feeling that the blanket was being dragged and creeping off the bed. I pulled it up again, but anew began the slow movement of descent.

"Rather surprised, I pulled it up afresh and held it, and must have dozed off, as I suppose. Awoke to feel it being pulled again; it was slipping, slipping, and then with a sudden violent jerk it was thrown on the floor. *Il faut dire* that during all this I had glanced several times at Bolter, who seemed profoundly asleep. But now, alarmed, I tried to wake him. In vain; he slept like the dead; his face, always a pasty white, was now like marble in the moonlight. After some hesita-

tion I put the blanket back on the bed and held it fast. The pulling at once began and increased in strength, and I, by this time thoroughly alarmed, put all my strength against it, and hung on like grim death.

"To get a better hold I had taken a turn over my head (or perhaps simply to hide), when suddenly I felt a pressure outside on my body, and a movement like fingers—they gradually approached my head. Mad with fear, I dashed off the blanket and grasped a hand, gazed on it for one moment in silent horror, and threw it away. No wonder; it was attached to no arm or body, it was hairy and dark-coloured, the fingers were short, blunt, with long, claw-like nails, and it was minus a thumb! Too frightened to get up, I had to stop in bed, and, I suppose, fell to sleep again, after fresh vain attempts to awaken Bolter. Next morning I told him about it. He said several men who had thus passed the night with him had seen this hand. 'But,' added he, 'it's lucky you didn't have the big black dogs also.' Tableau!"

While this may be merely a case of insistent haunting, there are circumstances connected with it which rather point to the working of some strange aboriginal magic—which suggest that possibly Bolter might have wronged or offended some of the natives, and so drawn down upon himself ill-will which resulted in this curious persecution. The description of the hand is scarcely that of a European, while its mutilation hints at a story in the background which can hardly have been a pleasant one. The black dogs are an unusual feature, for their presence is difficult to explain except on the hypothesis of a magical "sending," yet their friendliness seems quite inconsistent with that idea.

Very difficult to classify is an experience such as

that of Captain Morgan, which is described by Mr. Henry Spicer, in *Strange Things Among Us*, 2nd edition (1864), pp. 100-102.

*The Phantom Bird.*

"Captain Morgan arrived in London one evening in company with a friend, and took up his lodgings in a large old-fashioned house of the last century, to which chance had directed them. Captain Morgan was shown into a large bed-chamber, with a huge four-poster bed.

"He retired to bed, and slept, but was very soon awakened by a great flapping of wings close beside him, and a cold, weird sensation such as he had never before experienced spread through his frame. He started and sat upright in bed, when an extraordinary appearance declared itself, in the shape of an immense black bird, with outstretched wings, and red eyes flashing as it were with fire.

"It was right before him and pecked furiously at his face and eyes so incessantly that it seemed to him a wonder that he was enabled, with his arms and a pillow, to ward off the creature's determined assaults. During the battle it occurred to him that some large pet bird belonging to the family had effected its escape and been accidentally shut up in the apartment.

"Again and again the creature made at him with a malignant ferocity perfectly indescribable; but though he invariably managed to baffle the attack, he noticed that he never once succeeded in touching his assailant. The strange combat having lasted several minutes, the gallant officer grew irritated, and, leaping out of bed, dashed at his enemy. The bird retreated before him. The captain followed in close pursuit, driving his sable foe, fluttering and fighting, towards the sofa which

stood in the corner of the room. The moonlight shone full into the chamber, and Morgan distinctly saw the creature settle down, as if in terror, upon the embroidered seat of the sofa.

"Feeling now certain of his prey, he paused for a second or two, then flung himself suddenly upon the black object, from which he had never removed his gaze. To his utter amazement, it seemed to fade and dissolve under his very fingers. He was clutching the air; and in vain he searched, with lighted lamp, every nook and corner of the apartment, unwilling to believe that his senses could be the victims of so gross a delusion—no bird was to be found. After a long scrutiny the baffled officer once more retired to rest, and met with no further disturbance.

"While dressing in the morning, he resolved to make no allusion to what he had seen, but to induce his friend, on some pretext, to change rooms with him. That unsuspecting individual readily complied, and the next day reported, with much disgust, that he had had to contend for possession of the chamber with the most extraordinary and perplexing object he had ever encountered, to all appearance a huge black bird, which constantly eluded his grasp, and ultimately disappeared, leaving no clue to its mode of exit."

So far as we are aware, no huge black bird such as is here described at present exists on earth, though it is possible that the size has been somewhat exaggerated. Still, even if we were able to regard this as an ordinary apparition of somebody's pet eagle or vulture, there seems no conceivable reason for the ferocity of its unprovoked attack. It may have been a thought-form constructed by some one, living or dead, who for reasons of his own wished to prevent the occupation of

that chamber, and adopted this quaint but sufficiently effective method of gaining his end. It may have been a nature-spirit playing some inexplicable trick, yet the malignant ferocity described is very unlikely in that case. In order to pronounce with certainty in regard to such an experience as this, it would be necessary to go through it oneself. It is one of the exceptional cases which do not readily fit into any of the recognized classes; for undoubtedly exceptional experiences are possible for those who go out of the beaten track in astral life, just as adventures may fall in the way of those who abandon the ordinary lines of travel on the physical plane.

*An Awesome Tryst.*

For example, certain ghastly possibilities are suggested by a remarkable story given by Mrs. Crowe in *The Night Side of Nature* (p. 369), with regard to a college professor who, it is stated, had seduced one young woman, and afterwards married another. The first one apparently became troublesome to him, and one day, after having been last seen in his company, she was found murdered. He was naturally suspected of the crime, but nothing seems to have been proved against him. But from that time forward it is alleged that at a particular hour every evening he retired to a certain room, where he stayed great part of the night alone, so far as earthly companionship went; yet many people asserted in awe-stricken tones that the dead woman's voice had been distinctly heard in conversation with him.

*The Bride of Corinth.*

These possibilities are even more prominent in connection with another narrative related by Mrs. Crowe

on p. 372—that of the Grecian bride. The story runs that a certain young lady appeared, six months after her death, to a man who was staying in her father's house. She seems, with scant respect for conventionality, to have visited him in his chamber, exchanged some small gifts with him, and partaken of some refreshment—he having, of course, no suspicion that she was other than an ordinary living person. A nurse happens to see her, and rushes to inform the parents that their daughter has returned to life. Not unnaturally, she obtains no credence, though at last the mother, to pacify her, goes to look at the alleged miracle. By this time, however, all is dark, and it is evident that the visitor is asleep; but on interrogating him in the morning he confesses that he had had a visit from a young lady, and on request shows the ring which she had left with him in exchange for his own. This is instantly recognized by the parents as one which had been buried with their daughter, and they come to the conclusion that her body must have been despoiled by robbers.

As she had promised to return the next night, they resolve to wait and see whether anything occurs. She reappears, the father and mother are privately summoned by a servant who has been instructed to watch, and they at once recognize their dead daughter. She, however, does not seem to share their delight, but rather reproaches them for intruding upon her, saying that she had been permitted to spend three days with the stranger in the house of her birth, but that now she must go to the appointed place; and then she falls down dead, the body remaining visible to all. On the vault being opened, no body was found there, but the ring given to the girl by the young man was lying upon the bier. The body now seems to have been treated

as that of a vampire, and buried outside the city walls with many ceremonies and sacrifices.

If these two stories are true as they stand (there seems no possibility of definite verification in either case), they represent two very unusual and most undesirable varieties of half-astral, half-physical activity. The implication in the former is distinctly that the professor had been forced into an agreement to devote a certain amount of each day to the murdered girl. Probably she may have represented it to him as the necessary atonement for his crime, and may have threatened horrible hauntings (or perhaps a persecution of the wife) if he refused to comply. Obviously, since her voice was audible, she must have been able to materialize; and the whole proceeding must have been absolutely disastrous to the evolution of both parties. But naturally no person of clean and decent life ever becomes entangled with horrors such as these; they are among the penalties of a peculiarly mean and odious type of criminality.

The second story is unique so far as I know, though it seems to have a distant kinship with the vampire tales and traditions of Eastern Europe. As those had a foundation in fact, it is also possible that this may have; and certainly it comes to us with all the official authentication which was possible at the time when it is alleged to have occurred. To be living is well, if one knows how to use life intelligently; to be dead is much better; but to be in an unnatural condition between the two states is a fate at all costs to be avoided. Only under most unusual circumstances would there be even the slightest possibility of such a very undesirable development; and even then it could be accepted only by one whose whole thought and desire were fixed ex-



clusively upon the grossest side of physical life. The ordinary decent-living man need never cast one thought in the direction of such bizarre and monstrous horrors. The vampire corresponds in astral life to Lucrezia Borgia or the Maréchal de Retz on the physical plane; there have been such people in the world's history, but fortunately there will never be any opportunity for most of us of encountering them.

I mentioned in an earlier chapter the fact that for some time after passing over men are often unaware that they have died. Usually they presently make some effort the failure of which brings them to a realization of their condition; but sometimes, under rare combinations of circumstances, they remain for years in ignorance of what has happened to them. An interesting example of this sort is quoted from Mrs. Crowe's *Night Side of Nature*, p. 367.

*Unconscious of Death.*

"A gentleman of fortune and station in Ireland was one day walking along the road when he met a very old man, apparently a peasant, though well dressed, and looking as though he had on his Sunday habiliments. His great age attracted the gentleman's attention, the more that he could not help wondering at the alertness of his movements, and the ease with which he was ascending the hill. He consequently accosted him, enquiring his name and residence; and was answered that his name was Kirkpatrick, and that he lived in a cottage which he pointed out. Whereupon the gentleman expressed his surprise that he should be unknown to him, since he fancied he had been acquainted with every man on his estate. 'It is odd you have never seen me before,' returned the old man; 'for

I walk here every day.' 'How old are you?' asked the gentleman. 'I am one hundred and five,' answered the other, 'and have been here all my life.'

"After a few more words they parted and the gentleman, proceeding towards some labourers in a neighbouring field, enquired if they knew an old man of the name of Kirkpatrick. They did not; but on addressing the question to some older tenants, they said, 'Oh yes, they had known him and had been at his funeral; he had lived at the cottage on the hill, but had been dead twenty years.' 'How old was he when he died?' enquired the gentleman, much amazed. 'He was eighty-five,' said they; so that the old man gave the age that he would have reached had he survived to the period of this rencontre. This curious incident is furnished by the gentleman himself, and all he can say is, that it certainly occurred and that he is quite unable to explain it. He had never heard of this man in his life, for he had been dead several years before the estate came into his possession."

It is very rarely that a man can be dead for twenty years without knowing it, but here is an old man evidently rather proud of the fact that at the age of 105 he is still able to walk daily, and to climb a hill alertly and with ease. Probably he had for years lived much alone; his cronies and contemporaries must have all passed away, so he was very likely little in the habit of meeting and speaking to others; he may even have been deaf during the latter years of his life, and so unused to conversation. But why should he have been thus suddenly, once and once only, visible and audible to the gentleman who tells the story? And *was* he physically visible and audible at all, or was the narrator slightly clairvoyant for that hour? The latter is

on the whole the most probable supposition, but why it should have happened just then we have no evidence before us to show. We know that these moments of partial sensitiveness do come occasionally to men, but why or how we cannot always see; the causes governing them are sometimes clear and obvious, but at others they elude us—perhaps because they come from higher planes whose forces as yet we but very partially comprehend.

Among apparitional phenomena a curious type is that in which the soul either shows itself or symbolizes itself as a light. A case which will serve as an example is given in *The Night Side of Nature*, p. 119.

*Corpse-Candles.*

“A minister, newly inducted into his cure, was standing one evening leaning over the wall of the churchyard which adjoined the manse, when he observed a light hovering over a particular spot. Supposing it to be somebody with a lantern, he opened the wicket, and went forward to ascertain who it might be; but before he reached the spot the light moved onwards, and he followed, but could see nobody. It did not rise far from the ground, but advanced rapidly across the road, entered a wood, and ascended a hill, till it at length disappeared at the door of a farm-house. Unable to comprehend of what nature this light could be, the minister was deliberating whether to make enquiries at the house or return, when it appeared again, seeming to come out of the house, accompanied by another, passed him, and going over the same ground, they both disappeared on the spot where he had first observed the phenomenon. He left a mark on the grave by which he might recognize it, and the next day enquired of the

sexton whose it was. The man said it belonged to a family that lived up the hill (indicating the house the light had stopped at) named McD., but that it was a considerable time since anyone had been buried there. The minister was extremely surprised to learn, in the course of the day, that a child of that family had died of scarlet fever on the preceding evening."

It is difficult not to see in this a symbol of the soul of some older relation, already dead, going to fetch the soul of the newly-departed child. Yet it could be only a symbol and it must have been thus produced as it appeared to the mind of the dead person. The soul does not dwell with the body in the grave, but it is quite conceivable that an ignorant orthodox person might suppose that it did, and so imagine herself as going from the grave to fetch the soul of the child, and bring it home thither; and that would be quite sufficient to produce the appearance which the minister saw.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ASTRAL IMPRESSIONS.

We must now consider some examples of the class of phenomena due to what is called astral impression. Let us begin by quoting some apposite remarks of Mr. Stead's on this subject:—

“This is a type of a numerous family of ghosts of whose existence the phonograph may give us some hint by way of analogy. You speak into the phonograph, and for ever after as long as the phonograph is set in action it will reproduce the tone of your voice. You may be dead and gone, but still the phonograph will reproduce your voice, while with it every tone will be audible to posterity. So it may be in relation to ghosts. A strong emotion may be able to impress itself upon surrounding objects in such a fashion that at certain times, or under certain favourable conditions, they reproduce the actual image and actions of the person whose ghost is said to haunt.” (*Real Ghost Stories*, p. 310.)

This is exactly what does happen. Psychometry proves to us that even the tiniest physical object bears within it forever the impress of everything that has occurred in its neighbourhood. Normally this impression remains dormant so far as our senses are concerned, and it needs the peculiar power of the psychometer to come into touch with it; but naturally when it is excessively strong it needs less sensitiveness to become aware of it, and it may even be so much on the

surface as to obtrude itself upon the notice of the ordinary and undeveloped man.

Wherever tremendous mental disturbance has taken place, wherever overwhelming terror, pain, sorrow, hatred, or indeed any kind of intense passion has been felt, an impression of so very marked a character has been made by the violent astral vibrations, that a person with even the faintest glimmer of psychic faculty cannot but be deeply impressed by it. It would need but a slight temporary increase of sensibility to enable almost anyone to visualize the entire scene—to see the event in all its detail apparently taking place before his eyes; and under favourable circumstances the record may even be materialized, so that every one may perceive it by means of their physical senses.

Sometimes the feeling expresses itself vividly without reproducing the scene in detail. A very good example of this is given in *Notes and Queries*, of April 5th, 1873, signed T. Westwood.

#### *A Sound of Fear.*

“In a lonely neighbourhood on the verge of Enfield Chase stands an old house, much beaten by wind and weather. It was inhabited, when I knew it, by two elderly people, maiden sisters, with whom I had some acquaintance and who once invited me to dine with them, and meet a circle of local guests.

“Having some changes to make in my attire, a servant led the way to an upper chamber, and left me. No sooner was he gone than I became conscious of a peculiar sound in the room—a sort of shuddering sound, as of suppressed dread. It seemed close to me. I gave little heed to it at first, setting it down for the wind in the chimney, or the draught from the half-

open door; but, moving about the room, I perceived that the sound moved with me. Whichever way I turned it followed me. I went to the furthest extremity of the chamber—it was there also. Beginning to feel uneasy, and being quite unable to account for the singularity, I completed my toilet in haste, and descended to the drawing-room, hoping I should thus leave the uncomfortable sound behind me—but not so. It was on the landing on the stair; it went down with me—always the same sound of shuddering horror, faint, but audible, always close at hand. Even at the dinner-table, when the conversation flagged, I heard it unmistakably several times, and so near, that if there were an entity connected with it, we were two on one chair. It seemed to be noticed by nobody else, but it ended by harassing and disturbing me, and I was relieved to think I had not to sleep in the house that night.

“At an early hour, several of the guests having far to go, the party broke up, and it was a satisfaction to me to breathe the fresh, wholesome air of the night, and feel rid at last of my shuddering incubus.

“When I met my hosts again, it was under another roof. On my telling them what had occurred to me, they smiled, and said it was perfectly true; but added they were so used to the sound that it had ceased to perturb them. Sometimes, they said, it would be quiet for weeks; at others it followed them from room to room, from floor to floor, pertinaciously, as it had followed me. They could give me no explanation of the phenomenon. It was a sound, no more, and quite harmless.

“Perhaps so; but of what strange horror, not ended with life, but perpetuated in the limbo of invisible things, was that sound the exponent?”

*Ghostly Footsteps.*

Many years ago I myself had a little experience along these lines—a very trifling affair, yet one which illustrates exactly the law which we are considering. Some little distance from where I was then living, in one of the suburbs of London, a new road was in process of formation across a stretch of open ground. As yet no houses were erected, but the road was laid out, and the line of curbstones was already in place on each side from end to end, but the road was otherwise as yet unmade, and was separated from the broad, flat meadows on each side only by a low, open post-and-rail fence. Naturally everybody who went along it walked on the curbstones, since the rest of the road was still rough, and in wet weather very muddy in places. The road was about a mile in length, and as it made a convenient short cut to one of the railway stations, it was a good deal used in the daytime. It was entirely unlighted at night, but nevertheless I occasionally used it then, as the straight line of the curbstones was not difficult to follow. Presently, however, this road acquired rather a bad reputation; it was alleged to be haunted in some way, though I never heard any definite story connected with it. But I several times saw men lingering awhile at the corner before plunging into its darkness, in the hope that somebody else would come along, so that they might go together.

One still, moonlight night I turned into this road about nine o'clock and walked briskly down it. A thin mist hung over the fields, but I could see with perfect clearness both up and down the road, and across the meadows on each side. When about half-way along, and with nobody in sight, either before or behind, I



suddenly heard somebody begin running desperately, as if for his life. He was running along the curbstone, for the clear ringing sound of the footsteps was quite different from what it could have been on the soft earth. I know no words strong enough to express the sense of mad haste and overwhelming terror which was somehow implied in those sounds. I thought at once "Here is somebody horribly frightened; I wonder what he has seen, or what he has imagined." But where was the man? The madly-hastening footsteps came rushing wildly towards me; I stood still on the curbstone while they dashed up to me, under my very feet and away down the road behind me; yet no visible form passed me as I stood there startled and wondering! There was no possibility of any mistake; but for those loud, insistent footsteps, the stillness was absolute; there was no doubt whatever that they had rushed past me, and there was also no doubt whatever that there was no human being there to cause them. There lay the road, stretching away in the clear moonlight in both directions; the open fence by my side could not have concealed a dog from me, far less a man; and yet not a living being was in sight! I waited for a time, marvelling greatly; and then I resumed my way, walking circumspectly, and keeping very much on the alert. Nothing further happened, however, and from that day to this I have never heard anything which threw any light on the matter.

This was before the days of the Theosophical Society, and I had no comprehensible explanation to offer myself. I think even then some of my guesses came fairly near the truth; but they were only guesses, and I had finally to dismiss the affair from my mind as inexplicable. Now, by the light of Theosophical teaching,

the whole matter is quite simple. No doubt somebody *had* been frightened at that spot—badly frightened—and had rushed wildly away in frantic haste to escape towards the friendly gas-lights and human company from whatever he saw, or thought he saw; and so great had been the poor man's terror that it had made a deep impression upon surrounding objects. The astral vibrations of this shock of fear had been violent enough to make the phonographic record of which Mr. Stead writes—that which can reproduce itself upon the physical plane, and it had registered the sound of those flying, echoing footsteps on the stone in such a manner that they could be repeated for my benefit.

We are not yet sufficiently versed in the laws governing such phenomena to be able to distinguish why the sound only should have been reproduced, and not the fleeing form, as has happened in other similar cases. We can readily understand that there might not be force enough to materialize the whole event on the physical plane, so that it should appeal simultaneously to the eye and the ear; we can imagine that circumstances uncomprehended by us may make it easier in some cases that the sound shall be reproduced, and in other cases the vision; but as to what it is that determines which form the manifestation shall take we can as yet only speculate. Hauntings which consist only of sounds seem much more numerous than those which involve actual apparition; so it suggests itself that the much slower vibrations of sound are more easily registered than the very rapid ones, which would produce an effect upon the eye. But no doubt later researches will reveal much of interest along these lines.

*The Perpetuation of an Astral Impression.*

Another remarkable case of this kind is given by Dr. Lee in *Glimpses of the Supernatural*, vol. ii, p. 100. He tells us how the Rev. Joseph Jefferson, vicar of North Stainley, near Ripon, described to him a somewhat ghastly experience which he had had some eleven miles from York. A succession of the most horrible shrieks alarmed him one night as he was passing a certain spot, but no human being was there to account for these sounds. He found on enquiry that a murder had been committed there under peculiarly horrible circumstances, and that these shrieks were simply a reproduction of those uttered by the victim. An impression had been made in this case which sometimes appealed to the eye as well as to the ear, for he heard of a person who had seen an apparition of the huddled-up body of the victim lying at the spot where, many years before, it had in reality been found.

*Puritan Barbarities.*

It is asserted that the astral impression of as abominable a crime as ever was perpetrated still remains at Watton Abbey, near Beverley, Yorkshire. It appears that at the time of the great rebellion a band of Parliamentarian soldiers were rioting through this neighbourhood with all the hideous brutality and lust of cruelty which are so characteristic of the so-called "puritan." These villains broke into the Abbey, then occupied as a private house, in the absence of its master, snatched her baby from the arms of its mistress, dashed its brains out against the wall, and then cut down the mother and chopped off her head as any other band of savages might have done. It is scarcely remarkable that so

atrocious a murder should have left an ineffaceable record behind it, and that the apparition of a headless lady with a child in her arms should still be occasionally seen in the room where this "godly act" was perpetrated. An account of the hauntings was published in *The Leeds Mercury* in the month of June, 1884.

It is quite possible that the spectre of Wyecoller Hall, which I have previously mentioned, may be another case of this type. On the other hand, it may be the return of the murderer himself, or it may be merely a thought-form; for apparitions at the spot where some crime was committed are not infrequently thought-forms projected by the criminal, who (whether living or dead, but most especially when dead) is perpetually thinking over and over again the circumstances of his action. Since these thoughts are naturally specially vivid in his mind on the anniversary of the original crime, it is often only on that occasion that the forms which he creates are strong enough to materialize themselves to ordinary sight—a fact which accounts for the periodicity of some manifestations of this class. Another possibility is that the criminal's vivid thought of his deed may have the power of stirring up the record, as it were, and bringing within the range of physical visibility what would otherwise remain just beyond it. It is clear that no such consideration could be operative in the case of the Watton Abbey haunting, for the bloodthirsty barbarians who disgraced the name of humanity by their deeds there were evidently incapable of any feeling so elevated as remorse.

A case in which an impression had been made which produced a visible form, but no sound, is related in *Real Ghost Stories*, p. 192. The man who tells the story says:—

*The Miller on the Grey Horse.*

“Though I have travelled these roads all sorts of hours, summer and winter, for twenty years, I never met anything to startle me, or that I could not account for, until last Monday evening. About this time it was. Riding old Fan (a chestnut mare) here on this cross (a four-way cross-road), on my near side was a man on a grey horse, coming from this left-hand road. I had to pull my off-rein to give myself room to pass ahead of him; he was coming at a right angle to me. As I passed the head of his horse I called out ‘good-night.’ Hearing no reply I turned in my saddle to the off-side, to see whether he appeared to be asleep as he rode, but to my surprise I saw neither man nor horse. So sure was I that I had seen it, that I wheeled old Fan round and rode back to the middle of the cross, and on none of the four roads could I see man or horse, though there was light enough to see two hundred or three hundred yards, as we can now. Well, I then rode over to that gate (a gate at one corner opening into a grass field) thinking he might have gone that way; looking down by each hedge I could see nothing of my man and horse; and then—and not until then—I felt myself thrill and start with a shuddering sense that I had seen something uncanny, and I put the mare down this hill we are now on at her very best pace.

“But the strangest part of my story is to come. After I had done my business at the farm-house here, I told the old farmer and his wife what I had seen, as I have now told you. The old man said ‘For many years I have known thee on this road; have you never seen the like before on that cross?’ ‘Seen what before?’ I said. ‘Why, a man in light-coloured clothes on a grey horse,’ said

he. 'No, never,' said I, 'but I swear I have this evening.' The farmer asked had I never heard what happened to the miller about forty years ago. 'No, never a word,' I told him. 'Well,' he said, 'about forty years ago this miller, returning from market, was waylaid and murdered on that cross. He was dressed, as millers often are in this part of the country, in light-coloured clothes, and the horse was a grey horse. I took this farm soon after it all happened, and though I have known all this, and passed over that cross thousands of times, I never saw anything unusual there myself; but there have been a number of people who tell the same story you have now told mother and me, and describe the appearance of a man on a grey horse, seen and disappearing, as you have done to-night.' "

In this case there is no sound and no reproduction of the entire scene of the murder; only this quiet apparition of the miller riding up to the spot, and even that apparently seen only very occasionally. There is nothing in the story to show whether a materialization took place, or whether the impression was made directly upon the mind of the narrator; but certain deductions seem to suggest themselves from the facts recorded. There is no reproduction of a blow or a struggle, so it is evident that the astral impression was not made by the thought or feeling of the miller, for if it had been, the attack would inevitably have been the leading feature of the scene. The miller is seen riding towards the cross-road, but never away from it; in fact, he appears precisely as he must have appeared to the eyes of the villain lying in wait for him. The miller was unconscious of evil, and was simply riding peacefully home; before the attack, it is not likely that violent passions such as would produce a haunting were raging within him; why should

they be? But the murderer, watching and waiting with his fell purpose in his heart—who shall say with what tumult of conflicting emotions *he* saw the approach of his destined victim? There is every reason why the appearance of the unfortunate miller should be burnt deeply into his mind forever, and I should have little doubt that it is *his* mental picture which has so strongly impressed itself upon the surroundings that it is occasionally visibly reproduced.

Such visible reproduction might be due to the momentary intensification of the murderer's thought, or it might be only a question of impressibility on the part of those who saw it, for the very same man who saw it at one time might never again be in exactly the right condition to repeat the experience. The man whose account I have quoted states that he continued to pass that spot frequently for ten years after that, but never again saw the miller—which may have been because he was never again in a sufficiently receptive attitude, or because the image never happened to be materialized when he was passing.

There have been many accounts of the apparition of murdered men, yet it is very rarely that the victim himself is really there. If he is himself a criminal—if it is a case of quarrelling over the division of ill-gotten spoils—then it is quite possible that he may haunt the scene of his death; but if he is innocent he will be little likely to revisit the spot, or even to think much of it, unless indeed he is of a revengeful nature. It is practically always either a mere astral record or the gloomy brooding of the murderer, which produces whatever is seen or heard in connection with such cases.

All such astral forces tend to decrease with the lapse of time, and gradually die away. The record of every-

thing that happens is absolutely permanent on higher planes, and is always available for the trained clairvoyant; but that is entirely independent of the feelings of the persons concerned, and is produced in quite another way than this lower astral impression which alone can cause hauntings such as those which we have described. It is these astral impressions only which gradually die out; though even they may often endure for very long periods relatively to our physical life. Many people, for example, still feel uncomfortable when passing the site of the gallows at Tyburn, although they may be quite unaware from other sources of its exact locality.

There are many minor astral manifestations upon which I have not touched, since they do not bear in any way upon the conditions or powers of the man after death. Those readers who wish for a detailed description of the astral plane and its inhabitants, living and dead, human and non-human, should study the fifth of our series of Theosophical manuals. In this present book I am approaching the subject from another point of view—simply stating the facts with regard to death and the life which follows it, and showing how much of the truth discovered by the Theosophical observations might have been deduced from examples already before us, if only men had considered and compared them seriously, and given this most important of matters something of the attention which it deserves.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### HOW TO MEET A GHOST.

Before leaving this subdivision of my subject I will venture to offer a piece of advice. A good many apparitions are constantly showing themselves, and people are becoming less densely material, and therefore more readily impressible, as time goes on; so that it is well within the limits of possibility that some of my readers may some day have the privilege of seeing a ghost. I use that expression advisedly; first, because I regard such experiences as valuable, from the certainty and clear comprehension which they give with regard to the other life; and secondly, because an opportunity to help is always a privilege, and an apparition usually wants help of some kind.

The suggestion which I wish to offer is as to the way in which those to whom this good fortune comes should comport themselves. It seems to me that the ghost has very serious ground for complaint with regard to the way in which the average person receives him. It is usually a great effort for him to show himself—one which he does not undertake without very grave reason, or under stress of desperate need; and he can under ordinary circumstances maintain his materialization only for a few moments. The use of those few moments is all-important to him; they are probably not half long enough at best for what he wishes to say; yet the average person wastes this invaluable time by screaming, fainting, or running away! Let us put ourselves in the dead person's place, and realize what

it means to him when we act in this selfish and cowardly manner.

If a man obviously in serious trouble came up to us on the physical plane and asked for help, we should surely be at least willing to listen to him; why should we not extend the same courtesy to a man when he happens to be dead? We should feel no fear of the very same man when he possessed a physical body, by means of which he might conceivably harm us, if he were so disposed; why should we fear him after death, when we have the advantage over him (if it is an advantage) of an additional vehicle? He is just as much a man and a brother now as he was before, and he can by no possibility harm us in the slightest degree; what excuse is there for the attitude generally adopted?

#### *The Psychical Research Attitude.*

On the other hand, do not rush into the opposite extreme of exaggerated scepticism, and regard your visitor as a hallucination, or "an externalized visualization of a symbolical idea subconsciously conceived," to quote the language of the Psychical Research Society. All students of the occult must feel gratitude to that Society for the splendid work that it has done in patiently examining and tabulating so many examples in the course of its enquiry into a very unpopular science. I suppose we owe it something also for having made our line of thought almost respectable in the eyes of the world, so that instead of laughing us to scorn the fashionable person is now disposed to admit that "there may really be something in that sort of thing!"

But it is difficult to avoid smiling a little at the Society's attitude of eternally shivering on the brink of an admission, and at the astonishing way in which it con-

stantly misses the easy and obvious explanation of facts which have been observed and collected by its members, in order to take refuge in vain generalities and elaborate but unprovable theories. Scientific caution is an admirable and most necessary quality in all kinds of investigation, and most especially in psychic investigation; yet even this, like some other virtues, becomes a vice when in excess, and degenerates into blindness and prejudice; and in reading the writings of its members we are perpetually struck with the painful prominence given to the explanation which is laboured and far-fetched and the determined ignoring of that which is obvious and on the surface. Let me quote an example or two from Miss Goodrich Freer's *Essays in Psychical Research*.

*The Lost Ring.*

A gentleman dreams that he sees a particularly valuable ring of his lying in a certain position in his strawberry-bed; in the morning he looks for it in its usual case and is horrified to find it missing, but on going down stairs, there it is in the strawberry-bed. A very simple case of trivial clairvoyance in a dream, you will say. Oh dear no! on the contrary, we are asked to believe that the gentleman, picking *en passant* a tempting strawberry, had observed the ring *without knowing that he saw it*, and this unconscious knowledge had been brought under the notice of his conscious self by the memory of the dream!

*The Discrepant Wall-Paper.*

Again: "I was house-hunting with a friend, and we stood in an upper room in about the twentieth house we had seen that day. There was a hanging cupboard

in the room, with closed doors reaching from ceiling to floor. Suddenly it seemed to me that these doors stood open, and that I could see what was behind them. 'If you open those doors,' said I to my friend, 'you will find that the wall-paper inside is bright blue and of a small lozenge pattern, quite different from the rest of the room.' He did so, and my statement proved to be correct. I think it would be quite absurd to suppose that such a trifling circumstance was the result of clairvoyance, unless no other possible explanation be forthcoming. I had some months before gone over some houses in the same neighbourhood, suggested by the same agent, and though, so far as my conscious memory and observation went, the house was wholly strange to me, I think it more than probable that I had explored it on a previous occasion, and had then unconsciously noted the discrepancy in the wall-paper."

*The Credulity of the Sceptic.*

Why, oh why, are these scientific sceptics so extraordinarily credulous? Surely the perfectly simple and intelligible theory of etheric vision is infinitely more credible than the astounding, the impossible forgetfulness on the part of a sane person which we are here expected unquestioningly to accept. Surely instead of inventing ingenious but impossible explanations, it is simpler to accept the teaching which regards all these abnormal faculties as partial and premature manifestations of the magnificent power which is the birthright of humanity—which will presently be common to us all.

Another of their astonishing theories is that which seeks to account for everything in heaven and earth by the action of a "subliminal self." Dr. Alfred Russel

Wallace, in his *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, is specially trenchant in his criticism of this. On p. xvi he remarks: "The second or subconscious self, with its wide stores of knowledge (how gained no one knows,) its distinct character, its low morality, its constant lies, is as purely a theoretical cause as the spirit of a deceased person or any other spirit. To call this hypothesis scientific and that of spirit agency unscientific, is to beg the question at issue."

*Sudden Indisposition.*

One of the stories which he tells later in the same book is delicious, not so much for the quite ordinary phenomenon which it describes, as for the way in which it incidentally illustrates the favourite attitude of the genuine Psychical Researcher. After an account of an awful howling and shrieking heard by several people, it is stated that three dogs which were sleeping in various bed-rooms of the haunted house were all found cowering down with fright, their bristles standing straight up—one of them, a fierce bull-dog, hiding under a bed and trembling all over. The Psychical Researcher, however, soon disposes of all this; the sounds are summarily dismissed—"if not real natural sounds, they must have been collective hallucinations," and as to the dogs, it is suggested that by a truly remarkable coincidence they might all at the same moment have "been suddenly taken ill!"

Nevertheless, in spite of these absurdities, in spite of its marvellous vocabulary (including terms, such as panæsthesia, hypnopompic, hyperpromethia, methectic, which were described by one of its own members as "among the most striking of the phenomena of psychical research") in spite of its mistaken and grossly unfair

condemnation of our great founder Madame Blavatsky, this Society has done a great work in the world, and we express our thanks to it accordingly. Yet how easily it might have done enormously more!

Still its method of meeting a ghost, however scientifically satisfactory to its members, is hardly likely to be equally pleasing to *him*, nor is it to be recommended for general adoption. I should myself feel disposed to regard him less as a probable phenomenon of subjective indigestion, and more as a man and a brother who may possibly be in sore need of assistance.

*The Advisable Attitude.*

What then, you will say, would you suggest as to the behaviour of the man who meets a ghost? I should suggest ordinary politeness, such as you would show to him if he called upon you in the physical body, with in addition the recollection that he is probably hard pressed for time. Adopt at once the position (a habitual one with you, let us hope) that every contact is an opportunity; say to yourself, "Here is a person to help; how can I serve him?" Greet him with a friendly smile, and ask earnestly "What can I do for you? I shall be delighted to be of service." Perhaps he may be able to tell you then and there; perhaps (for an audible voice is not always within his power) he may endeavour in some other way to indicate his desires. If he can do neither of these, but disappears with a baffled expression, be sure that though he has vanished from your sight he is still near you, and speak to him as though he were still perceptible to your senses. Ask him whether he can communicate what he has to say by means of raps, and if it is found that he can respond, arrange with him a code of simple signals, such as is

commonly adopted at a spiritualistic séance. If he can do none of these things, then tell him that when you fall asleep at night you will be at his service on his own plane, and that he can then say what he wishes without the slightest difficulty. Meanwhile assure him that all is well, and that he must try not to feel anxiety or dread. In effect, your attitude should be calm and soothing, yet alert to give whatever help is needed.

*The Necessary Preparation.*

In order that you may be able to do this when the emergency arises, you must train yourself now to understand what death is, and to realize how perfectly natural and unchanged the dead man is. If you think of him solely as a fellow-man needing assistance, you cannot possibly fear him, for you will love him, and "perfect love casteth out fear." Another exceedingly important point is to train young children to regard the dead in this way. Far too often injudicious nurses frighten children with foolish stories or threats based on superstition, and it is scarcely ever possible afterwards entirely to eradicate the false conceptions thus carelessly given. But if from the first children are taught that there is no such thing as death in the ordinary acceptance of that word; if they understand that their little playmate or their aged friend has not gone away from them, but has only put off the thick outer garment that they can see, in order to enter into a higher and wider form of life, which he could not reach while still cramped by its weight; if they further know that sometimes, by fortunate circumstances, it becomes possible that one who has so withdrawn himself from us may yet show himself once more in the physical world, and that the person who in this way gets some glimpse of that other

life is indeed highly favoured, and may perhaps have an opportunity to be useful—then those children will not only be saved from much foolish fear and misconception themselves, but will also be prepared to meet the dead in the right spirit if they should ever be so happy as to come into contact with them.

Then indeed may a glorious future open out before us—a future in which dead and living may move on side by side in a true communion of saints, each ever ready to help the other without hesitation or fear of misunderstanding; when the immortality of man shall be no longer a nebulous theological dogma, but a recognized and demonstrated truth; when we shall care nothing whether we happen at the moment to have a physical body or not, so long as we have opportunity for progress and for service. Such an attitude towards life and death is no dream of the far-off future, for those who grasp the Theosophical teaching and live the Theosophical life are realizing it here and now. Live the life and you will see for yourself, as we have seen; study the teaching, and you will know for yourself, even as we know who have studied and have tried to live our lives intelligently under the great Divine Law of purity, unselfishness and love.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### SPIRITUALISTIC PHENOMENA.

The investigation of the phenomena which take place at spiritualistic séances is another line along which information with regard to man's survival after death might have been obtained. Just as many of the facts so clearly stated for us by Theosophy might have been deduced from careful observation and comparison of the records of apparitions, so also many of them might have been inferred from equally careful examination and comparison of the accounts given in spiritualistic literature. They were not so inferred, however, except by the spiritualists themselves, and not usually clearly expressed as a coherent system even by them. But just as, now that we know the facts from Theosophical sources, we can see how all the various types of apparitions fall into place and are explained by them, so we may also see how spiritualistic manifestations can be classified and comprehended by means of the same knowledge.

It has always seemed to me that our spiritualistic friends ought to welcome the Theosophical system, for much of the difficulty which they find in obtaining acceptance for their phenomena arises from the belief that their claims are in opposition to science, and not in harmony with any reasonable scheme. This idea is an entirely mistaken one, yet spiritualism does little to dispel it; it continues (quite rightly) to insist upon its facts, but does not usually attempt to harmonize them with science. There is, it seems to me, rather a tendency to cry "How marvellous! how wonderful! how beautiful!" and to be

lost in admiration and awe, instead of realizing how entirely natural it all is, and more beautiful *because* it is so natural. For all that is really natural is beautiful; it is only we, reduced to pessimism by our own corruption of and interference with Nature's methods, who fall back in doubt, and say hesitatingly that certain things are too good, too beautiful to be true—not yet understanding that it is precisely because a thing is good and beautiful that it must also be true, and that a far more accurate expression would be “It is too good *not* to be true.” For God is Truth, and He is good.

*How Theosophy Explains It.*

The Theosophical explanation as to the planes of nature, and the existence of many varieties of more finely subdivided matter, with their appropriate forces playing through them, at once opens the way to a comprehension of many of the phenomena of the séance-room. When we further come to understand the possession by man of vehicles corresponding to each of these planes, in each of which he has new and extended powers, much that was before difficult becomes clear as noonday. I have written fully of these powers in my little book on *Clairvoyance*, so I need not repeat that account here. It will be sufficient to remark that when we grasp the nature of these powers we see at once how it is possible for the dead man, if he is so disposed, to find a passage in a closed book, to read a letter inside a locked box, to see and report what is happening at any distance, or to read the thoughts of any person, present or absent. All that the dead man does along any of these lines can be done with equal facility by the living man who has developed his latent powers of astral vision, and we thus realize that for a man residing in and functioning through an astral

body, these actions which to us appear phenomenal and marvellous must bear a very different aspect, for to him they are simply his ordinary every-day methods of procedure. The man who has not studied such matters is unused to these manifestations, and cannot comprehend how they are produced; he feels toward them just as a savage might towards our use of the electric light or the telephone. But the intelligent and cultured man is familiar to some extent with the mechanism in each of these cases, and so he regards the results obtained no longer as magical, but as natural; he looks upon the matter in an entirely different light.

By the light of Theosophical knowledge of the astral plane and its possibilities, then, we may proceed to attempt some sort of classification of the phenomena of the séance-room. Perhaps we shall find it easiest to arrange them according to the powers employed in their production, and in this way they fall readily into five divisions:

1. Those which involve simply the use of the medium's body—trance speaking, automatic writing, drawing or painting, and personation; and sometimes the working of the planchette.

2. Those which are dependent upon the possession of the ordinary astral sight, such as the finding of a passage in a closed book, the reading of writing enclosed within a locked box, the answering of mental questions, or the finding of something or some person that is missing.

3. Those which involve partial materialization—usually not carried to the point of visibility. Under this head would come raps, the tilting or turning of tables, the moving and floating of objects, slate-writing, or any kind of writing or drawing done directly by the hand of the dead man, and not through the agency of the medium;

the touches by the hand of the dead, or the sound of their voices—"the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still," for which the poet yearned. Almost all of the minor activities of the séance come in under this head, for to it we must assign the playing of various musical instruments, the winding up and floating about of the musical box, and even the cold wind which is so constant a phenomenon in the earlier stages of the sittings. Probably the working of the planchette or of the message board called the "ouija" usually comes under this category.

4. Those miscellaneous activities which demand a somewhat greater knowledge of the laws of astral physics, such as the precipitation of writing or of a picture, the intentional production of the various kinds of lights, the duplication of objects, their apport from a distance or their production in a closed room, the passage of matter through matter, or the handling or the production of fire.

5. Visible materialization.

I propose to take up each of these classes, and endeavour to illustrate and explain them as far as I can, drawing examples sometimes from recognized books upon the subject, and sometimes from my own experience. I spent much time during a good many years in patient investigation of spiritualism, and there is scarcely a phenomenon of any sort of which I read in the books which I have not repeatedly seen under test conditions, so that this is a subject upon which I feel myself able to speak with a certain amount of confidence. It may perhaps be useful for me as an introduction to our detailed consideration of the subject to describe how I came to make my first feeble experiments along this line.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.

The first time that, so far as I can recollect, I ever heard spiritualism mentioned was in connection with the séances held by Mr. D. D. Home with the Emperor Napoleon. The statements made with reference to those seemed to me at that time quite incredible, and when reading the account of them aloud to my mother one evening I expressed strong doubts as to whether the description could possibly be accurate. The article ended, however, with the remark that anyone who felt unable to credit the story might readily convince himself of its possibility by bringing together a few of his friends, and inducing them to sit quietly round a small table either in darkness or in dim light, with the palms of their hands resting lightly upon the surface of the table. It was stated that a still easier plan was to place an ordinary silk hat upon the table brim upwards, and let two or three people rest their hands lightly upon the brim. It was asserted that the hat or table would presently begin to turn, and in this way the existence of a force not under the control of any one present would be demonstrated.

This sounded fairly simple, and my mother suggested that, as it was just growing dusk and the time seemed appropriate, we should make the experiment forthwith. Accordingly I took a small round table with a central leg, the normal vocation of which was to support a flower pot containing a great arum lily. I brought in my own silk hat from the stand in the hall and placed it on the table, and we put our hands upon its brim as prescribed.

The only person present besides my mother and myself was a small boy of twelve, who, as we afterwards discovered, was a powerful physical medium; but I knew nothing about mediums then. I do not think that any of us expected any result whatever, and I know that I was immensely surprised when the hat gave a gentle but decided half-turn on the polished surface of the table.

Each of us thought the other must have moved it unconsciously, but it soon settled that question for us, for it twirled and gyrated so vigorously that it was difficult for us to keep our hands upon it. At my suggestion we raised our hands; the hat came up under them, as though attached to them, and remained suspended a couple of inches from the table for a few moments before falling back upon it. This new development astonished me still more, and I endeavoured to obtain the same result again. For a few minutes the hat declined to respond, but when at last it *did* come up as before, it brought the table with it! Here was my own familiar silk hat, which I had never before suspected of any occult qualities, suspending itself mysteriously in air from the tips of our fingers, and, not content with that defiance of the laws of gravity on its own account, attaching a table to its crown and lifting that also! I looked down to the feet of the table; they were about six inches from the carpet, and no human foot was touching them or near them! I passed my own foot underneath, but there was certainly nothing there—nothing physically perceptible, at any rate.

Of course when the hat first moved it had crossed my mind that the small boy must somehow be playing a trick upon us; but in the first place he obviously was *not* doing so, and in the second he could not possibly have produced this result unobserved. After about two minutes the table dropped away from the hat, and almost im-

mediately the latter fell back to its companion, but the experiment was repeated several times at intervals of a few minutes. Then the table began to rock violently, and threw the hat off—a plain hint to us, if any of us had known enough to take it. But none of us had any idea of what to do next, though we were keenly interested in these extraordinary movements. I was not myself thinking of the phenomenon in the least as a manifestation from the dead, but only as the discovery of some strange new force.

I spoke of these curious occurrences next day to some friends, and found one among them who had once or twice seen something of the sort, and was familiar with the rudiments of spiritualistic procedure. I promptly invited him to join us on the following evening, and to assist in our experiments. The same phenomena were reproduced, but this time, by our friend's aid, we asked questions and found that the table would tilt intelligently in response to them. The communicating entity, however, could not have been a man of any great knowledge, for nothing of any importance was said, either then or afterwards, and the manifestations were always rather of the nature of horse-play. Their most remarkable feature was the enormous physical strength displayed on several occasions. Heavy furniture was frequently dashed violently about, and sometimes considerably damaged, yet none of us were really hurt. One especially sceptical friend had the end of a heavy brass fender dropped upon his foot, but I think he distinctly brought it upon himself.

#### *Violent Demonstrations.*

The silk hat was ruined at the second séance, so thereafter we placed our hands directly upon the table—or at least we commenced by doing so, for after a few minutes

it was usually waltzing about so wildly that we could only occasionally touch it. At the third sitting (if that term be not a misnomer as applied to an evening spent mainly in jumping about to avoid the charges of various articles of furniture) our little table suffered considerably. During a moment of comparative rest, when we were able to keep our hands on it, we heard a curious whirring sound underneath it, and some small object fell to the floor. Picking it up we found it to be a screw, and wondered where the "spirits" had got such a thing, and why they had brought it. Twice more the same whirring sound was heard, and two more screws were presented to us, but even yet we did not realize what was being done.

Suddenly we were startled by what I can only describe as an exceedingly heavy kick on the under side of the table, which dashed it upwards against our hands and all but threw us over. The effect precisely resembled that of a vigorous kick from a very heavy boot, and it was repeated three or four times in rapid succession until the top of the table was broken away from the leg. The leg waltzed off by itself, while the top fell to the floor, but by no means to lie quiet there. If a coin be set spinning with the thumb and fingers upon a smooth surface it displays a peculiar wobbling rotation just as it is in the act of settling down to rest. That was exactly the motion of this table upon the floor, and two strong men kneeling upon it, and exerting all their force to hold it down, were unable to do so, but were thrown off apparently with the utmost ease.

As we were holding it as nearly down upon the carpet as we could, the same prodigious kicks came underneath it as before, so that whoever kicked could do so through the carpet and the floor of the room without the



slightest hindrance. It was only after the performance was over, and we came to examine our table, that we understood what had happened. The entity who was playing with us had apparently wished to separate the top of the table from the lower part, and had somehow contrived to extract three of the screws as though with a screw-driver; but the fourth had been rusted in and could not be removed—hence apparently the kicks which broke it out and accomplished the separation.

This exhibition of prodigious strength at a séance is by no means unusual. In describing one which took place on Staten Island in the spring of 1870, Mr. Robert Dale Owen remarks:

“Then—probably intensified by the darkness—commenced a demonstration exhibiting more physical force than I had ever before witnessed. I do not believe that the strongest man living could, without a handle fixed to pull by, have jerked the table with anything like the violence with which it was now, as it seemed, driven from side to side. We all felt it to be a power, a single stroke from which would have killed any one of us on the spot.” (*The Debatable Land*, p. 285.)

*Evidence of Unknown Power.*

These phenomena, which thus came so unexpectedly into my life, would no doubt have been despised as frivolous by the veteran spiritualist, but to me they were exceedingly interesting. They took place in my own house, they were entirely unconnected with any professional medium, and they were incontrovertibly free from any suspicion of trickery. Consequently here were certain indubitable facts, absolutely new to me, and needing investigation. I had no knowledge then that there was a considerable literature upon the subject, and I was not even

expecting from this study any proof of the life after death. So far, I had had evidence only of the existence of some unseen intelligence, capable of wielding enormous power of a kind quite different from any recognized by science. But it was precisely that power which interested me, and I was anxious to discover whether there was any method by which it could be utilized for the general benefit.

We never got very much further in these home investigations. My mother feared the destruction of her furniture, and in deference to her objections we simply suspended operations when the forces became too boisterous, resuming our sitting only when things quieted down. We had no raps, and no direct voices; any communications which came were always given by the tilting or rising of the table. The entity concerned seemed willing enough to give tests along its own peculiar lines. For example, it occurred to us one evening to ask whether the table could rise in the air without our hands resting upon it; it promptly responded that it could and would, so we all drew back hastily, and watched that table rise till its feet were about a yard from the ground, while it was entirely out of the reach of every member of the party. It remained suspended for perhaps a minute or rather more, and then sank gently to the carpet.

### *Lights.*

Lights of various kinds frequently appeared, but usually they gave us the impression not so much of being intentionally shown as of manifesting incidentally in the course of other phenomena. They were of three varieties: *a.* little sparkling lights like those of fireflies, which used to play over and about our hands, while they rested on the table; *b.* large pale luminous bodies, several inches

in diameter and often crescent-shaped; *c.* a vivid flash resembling lightning, which on one occasion crossed the room and struck and overthrew a large plant in a pot, leaving upon it distinct marks of scorching, much as I suppose lightning might have done. The first and third varieties gave us the impression of being electrical, while the second appeared to be rather phosphorescent in nature. Nothing occurred that we could definitely call materialization, though dark bodies of some sort occasionally passed between us. These phenomena usually took place by firelight, though on one occasion we obtained a few very much modified manifestations in full daylight. The room appeared to become charged with some kind of force, as though with electricity; for at least an hour after the séance was closed the furniture would continue to creak mysteriously, and the table on several occasions moved out two or three feet from its corner after its flower-pot had been replaced upon it.

The messages were quite a subordinate feature, and it seemed difficult for the entity, whatever it may have been, to curb its exuberant spirits long enough to go through the tedious process of spelling out a message by tilts. We made many attempts to obtain definite information in this way, but met with no success. It always gave us the impression of being in a condition of wild rollicking enjoyment, too much excited to be patient or coherent. Frequently it would dance vigorously and untiringly, keeping time with any music that we played or sang. Its favourite tune appeared to be the well-known spiritualistic hymn, "Shall we gather at the river?" and if at any time the power seemed deficient or the manifestations lethargic, we had only to sing that air to rouse it at once into a condition of the wildest enthusiasm and agility. Sometimes it was decidedly mischievous, and when it could

be induced to deliver a message it was by no means always consistent or truthful. It appeared to be capable of annoyance; certainly on one occasion when I denounced one of its statements as false, the table leaped straight at me, and would apparently have struck me severely in the face, if I had not caught it on its way. Even so, as I held it in the air, it made violent efforts to get at me, and had to be dragged away forcibly by my friends, just as though it had been an infuriated animal. But in a few moments its strength or its passion seemed to give out, and it was harmless once more.

*With Professional Mediums.*

Stimulated by these experiences, I began to make further enquiries, and soon found that there were books and periodicals devoted to this subject, and that I might carry my investigations much further by coming into connection with regular mediums. I attended a large number of public séances, and saw many interesting things at them, but the most remarkable and satisfactory results, I soon found, were obtainable only when the circles were small and harmonious. I therefore very frequently had private séances, and often invited mediums to my own house, where I could be perfectly certain that there existed no machinery by means of which trickery could be practised. In this way I soon acquired a good deal of experience, and was able to satisfy myself beyond all doubt that some at least of the manifestations were due to the action of those whom we call the dead. I found mediums of all sorts, good, bad and indifferent. There were some who were earnest and enthusiastic, and honestly anxious to aid the enquirer to understand the phenomena. Others were incredibly ignorant and illiterate, though probably honest enough; others again impressed

me as sanctimonious, oleaginous and untrustworthy. A little experience, however, soon taught me upon whom I could depend, and I restricted my experiments accordingly. I pursued them for a good many years, and during that time saw many strange things—many which would probably be deemed incredible by those unfamiliar with these studies, if I should endeavour to describe them. Such of them as aptly illustrate our various classes I may perhaps cite as we go on; but to give the whole of those experiences would need a much larger book than this. Let us turn now to our classification.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### UTILIZATION OF THE MEDIUM'S BODY.

It seems obvious that the easiest course for a dead man who wishes to communicate with the physical plane is to utilize a physical body, if he is able to find one which it is within his power to manage. This method does not involve the learning of unfamiliar and difficult processes, as materialization does; he simply enters into the body provided for him and uses it precisely as he was in the habit of using his own. One of the characteristics of a medium is that his principles are readily separable, and therefore he is able and usually willing thus to yield up his body for the temporary use of another when required. Such resignation of his vehicle may be either partial or total; that is to say, the medium may retain his consciousness as usual, and yet permit his hand to be employed by another for the purposes of automatic writing; or in some cases his vocal organs may also be thus employed by another while he is still in possession of his body, and understands fully what is being said. On the other hand he may retire from his body just as he would do in deep sleep, allowing the dead man to enter and make the fullest possible use of the deserted tenement. In this latter case the medium himself is quite unconscious of all that is said or done; or at least, if he is able to observe to some extent by means of his astral senses, he does not usually retain any recollection of it when he resumes control of his physical brain.

*Trance-speaking.*

A certain type of spiritualism—one which has a very large number of adherents—is almost entirely occupied with this phase of mediumship. There are many groups to whom spiritualism is simply their religion, and they attend a Sunday evening meeting and listen to a trance-address just as people of other denominations go to church and hear a sermon. Nor does the average trance-address in any way differ from the average sermon in intellectual ability; its tone is commonly vaguer, but somewhat more charitable; but its exhortations follow the same general lines. Broadly speaking, there is never anything new in either of them, and they both continue to us the advice which our copy-book headings used to give us at school—"Be good and you will be happy," "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and so on. But the reason that these maxims are eternally repeated is simply that they are eternally true; and if people who pay no attention to them when they find them in a copy-book will believe them and act upon them when they are spoken by a dead man or rapped out through a table, then it is emphatically well that they should have their pabulum in the form in which they can assimilate it.

Trance-speaking of the ordinary type is naturally less convincing as a phenomenon than many others, for it is undeniable that a very slight acquaintance with the histrionic art would enable a person of average intelligence to simulate the trance-condition and deliver a mediocre sermon. I have heard some cases in which the change of voice and manner was so entire as to be of itself convincing; I have seen cases where speech in a language unknown to the medium, or reference to matters entirely outside his knowledge, assured one of the genu-

iness of the phenomenon. But on the other hand I have heard many a trance address in which all the vulgarities, the solecisms in grammar and the hideous mispronunciations of an illiterate medium were so closely reproduced that it was very difficult indeed to believe that the man was not shamming. Such cases as this last have no evidential value, yet even in them I have learnt that it is well to be charitable, and to allow the medium as far as possible the benefit of the doubt; for I know, first, that a medium attracts round him dead men of his own type, not differing much from his level of advancement or culture; and secondly, that any communication which comes through a medium is inevitably coloured to a very large extent by that medium's personality, and might very easily be expressed in his style and by means of such language as he would normally use.

*Automatic Writing.*

The same remarks will apply in the case of automatic writing. Sometimes the dead man will control the medium's organism sufficiently to write clearly, characteristically, unmistakably; but more often the handwriting will be a compromise between his own and that of the medium, and very often it degenerates into an almost illegible scrawl. Here again I have seen cases which carried their own proof on the face of them, either by the language in which they were written or by internal evidence. Sometimes also curious tricks are attempted which make any theory of fraud exceedingly improbable. For example, I have seen a whole page of writing dashed off in a few minutes, but written backward, so that one had to hold it before a mirror in order to be able to read it. In another case, before a sitting with Mrs. Jencken (better known by her maiden-name of Kate Fox, as the



little girl who first discovered in 1847 that raps would answer questions intelligently, and so founded modern spiritualism), her little baby-in-arms, perhaps twelve months old, took a pencil in its tiny hand and *wrote*—wrote firmly and rapidly a message purporting to come from a dead man. What intelligence guided that baby hand I am not prepared to say, but it certainly could not have been that of its legitimate owner, and it was equally certainly not that of its mother, for she held the child away from her while it wrote.

*The Private Archangel.*

Very frequently people who are not mediums in any other sense of the word appear to be open to influence along this line. Quite a large number of persons are in the habit of receiving private communications written through their own hands; and the vast majority of them attach quite undue importance to them. Again and again I have been assured by worthy ladies that the whole Theosophical teaching contained nothing new for them, since it had all been previously revealed to them by their own especial private teacher, who was of course a person of entirely superhuman glory, knowledge and power—an archangel at least! When I come to investigate I usually find the archangel to be some very worthy departed gentleman who has either been taught or who has discovered for himself some portion of the facts with regard to astral life and evolution, and is deeply impressed with the idea that if he can only make this known to the world at large it will necessarily effect a radical change and reform in the entire life of humanity. So he seeks and finds some impressible lady, and urges upon her the conviction that she is a chosen vessel for the regeneration of mankind, that she has a mighty

work to do to which her life must be devoted, that future ages will bless her name, and so on.

In all this the worthy gentleman is usually quite serious; he has now realized a few of the elementary facts of life, and he cannot but feel what a difference it would have made in his conduct and his attitude if he had realized them while still on the physical plane. He very rightly concludes that if he could induce the whole world really to believe this, a great change would ensue; but he forgets that practically all that he has to say has been taught in the world for thousands of years, and that while he was in earth-life he paid no more attention to it than others are now likely to pay to his lucubrations. It is the old story over again: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Of course a little common-sense and a little acquaintance with the literature of this subject would save these worthy ladies from their delusion of a mission from on high; but self-conceit is subtle and deeply rooted, and the idea of being specially chosen out of all the world for a divine inspiration is, I suppose, pleasurable to a certain type of people. Usually the communications are infinitely far from "containing all the Theosophical teaching;" they contain perhaps a few fragments of it, or far more often a few nebulous generalizations tending somewhat in the Theosophical direction.

Occasionally also the instructor is a living man in the astral body—usually an Oriental; and in that case it is perfectly natural that his information should have a Theosophical flavour. It must be recollected that Theosophy is in no sense new, but is the very oldest teaching in the world, and that the broad outlines of its system are perfectly well known everywhere outside of the limits

of the extraordinary cloud of ignorance on philosophical subjects which Christianity appears to bring in its train. It is therefore small wonder that any glimpse of a wider and more sensible theory should seem to have something of Theosophy about it; but naturally it will very rarely be found to have either the precision or the fulness of the scheme as given to us by the Masters of Wisdom through their pupil Madame Blavatsky.

It appears to make the process of writing through the hand of the medium even easier for the dead man when that hand is rested upon the little board called planchette. This form of manifestation, however, does not always belong to our present category. Sometimes it seems that the hand of the medium moves the planchette, though it is not by his intelligence that it is directed, for it often writes in languages or about matters of which he is ignorant. But on other occasions it appears to move rather under his hand than with it, suggesting that it is charged with the vital force from his hand, just as the hat or the table was in the experiments previously described. In that case the movement of the board would probably be directed by another partially materialized hand, and so the phenomenon would belong to our third class.

#### *Drawing or Painting.*

The phenomenon of automatic drawing or painting is of exactly the same nature as that of writing, though naturally it is not nearly so common, because the art of drawing is much less widely diffused than is that of writing. Still it sometimes happens that a dead man has a talent for rapid drawing, and can very quickly produce a pretty little landscape or a passable portrait through the hand of a readily-impressible medium.

There are certain mediums who make a specialty of this obtaining of portraits of the dead, and they apparently find that it pays them exceedingly well. I have myself seen passable work produced in this way, though not equal to that done directly by the hand of the dead man, or by precipitation. There are also cases in which such portraits are drawn by a living person who is himself clairvoyant; but that is obviously not an example of mediumship at all, and so does not come into our present category.

It must be remembered that for the production of a portrait of a dead person by any of these methods it is not in the least necessary that he should be present, though of course he *may* be. But when surviving friends come to a séance expecting and earnestly hoping for a portrait of some dead man, their thought of him, so strongly tinged with desire, makes a very effective image of him in astral matter, and this is naturally clearly visible to any other dead man, so that the portrait can be drawn quite easily from it. It is, however, also true that this same strong thought about the dead man is certain to attract his attention, and he is therefore quite likely to come and see what is being done. So it is quite possible that he may be present, but the portrait is not proof of it.

#### *Personation.*

I am employing this term in a technical sense which is well known to those who have studied these phenomena. I am aware that it has also been employed to describe those cases in which a dishonest medium has presented himself before his audience as a "spirit-form," but I am dealing with occurrences of very different type from that. All who have seen good examples of trance-

speaking will have noticed how the entire expression of the medium's face changes, and how he adopts all kinds of little tricks of manner and speech, which are really those of the man who is speaking through his organism.

There are instances in which this process of change and adaptation goes very much further than this—in which a distinct alteration takes place in the features of the medium. Sometimes this change is only apparent and not real, the fact being that the earnest effort of the ensouling personality to express himself through the medium acts mesmerically upon his friend, and deludes him into thinking that he actually sees the features of the dead man before him. When that is so the phenomenon is of course purely subjective, and a photograph taken of the medium at that moment would show his face just as it always is.

Sometimes, however, the change is a real one, and can be shown to be such by means of the camera. When this is so, there are still two methods by which the effect may be produced. I have seen at least one case of apparent change of feature in which what really took place may best be described as the partial materialization of a mask; that is to say, such parts of the medium's face as corresponded fairly well with that to be represented were left untouched, whereas other parts which were entirely unsuitable were covered with a thin mask of materialized matter which made them up into an almost perfect imitation, though slightly larger than the original. But I have also seen other cases in which the face to be represented was much smaller than that of the medium, and the exact imitation secured undoubtedly involved an alteration in the form of the medium's features. This will naturally seem an absolute impossibility to one who has not made a special study of these things, for the

majority of us little recognize the extreme fluidity and impermanence of the physical body, and have no conception how readily it may be modified under certain conditions.

*Impressibility of the Physical Body.*

There is plenty of evidence to show this, though the circumstances which call into operation forces capable of producing such a result are fortunately rare. In *Isis Unveiled*, vol. i, p. 386, Madame Blavatsky gives us a series of ghastly examples of the way in which the thought or feeling of a mother can change the physical body of her unborn child. Cornelius Gemma tells of a child that was born with his forehead wounded and running with blood, the result of his father's threats towards his mother with a drawn sword which he directed towards her forehead. In Van Helmont's *De Injunctis Materialibus* it is reported that the wife of a tailor at Mechlin saw a soldier's hand cut off in a quarrel, which so impressed her that her child was born with only one hand, the other arm bleeding. The wife of a merchant of Antwerp, seeing a soldier who had just lost his arm, brought forth a daughter with one arm struck off and bleeding. Another woman witnessed the beheading of thirteen men by order of the Duc d'Alva. In her case also the child, quite perfect in other respects, was born without a head and with bleeding neck.

The whole question of the appearance of stigmata on the human body, which seems so thoroughly well authenticated, is only another instance of the influence of mind upon physical matter; for just as the mind of the mother acts upon the fœtus, so do the minds of various saints, or of women like Catherine Emmerich, act upon their own organism. On p. 384 of *The Night Side of Nature*

we find another rather horrible example of the action of violent emotion upon the physical body.

"A letter from Moscow, addressed to Dr. Kerner, in consequence of reading the account of the Nun of Dulmen, relates a still more extraordinary case. At the time of the French invasion, a Cossack having pursued a Frenchman into a *cul de sac*, an alley without an outlet, there ensued a terrible conflict between them, in which the latter was severely wounded. A person who had taken refuge in this close, and could not get away, was so dreadfully frightened that when he reached home there broke out on his body the very same wounds that the Cossack had inflicted on his enemy."

We shall have to refer to this question when dealing with materializations; but in the meantime, and as far as personation is concerned, I can myself testify that it is possible for the physical features of a medium to be completely changed for a time into the exact resemblance of those of the dead man who is speaking through him. This phenomenon is not a very common one, so far as I have seen or heard, and we may presume that the reason for its rarity is that ordinary materialization would probably be easier to produce. The personation, however, took place in full daylight on each occasion when I witnessed it; whereas materialization is usually performed by artificial light, and there must not be too much even of that, for reasons which will be explained when we come to deal with that side of the question.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### CLAIRVOYANCE IN SPIRITUALISM.

Many of the phenomena commonly displayed at a spiritualistic gathering are simply the manifestation of the ordinary powers and faculties natural to the astral plane, such as are possessed by every dead man. I have already explained in my little work on *Clairvoyance* what these powers are, and any one who will take the trouble to read that will see how clearly the possession of such sense accounts for the faculty so often exhibited by the dead of reading a closed book or a sealed letter, or describing the contents of a locked box. I have had repeated evidence through many different mediums of the possession of this power; sometimes the knowledge obtained by its means was given out through the medium's body in trance-speaking, and at other times it was expressed directly by the dead man, either in his own voice or by slate-writing.

These astral faculties sometimes include a certain amount of prevision, though this is possessed in very varying degrees; and they also frequently give the power of psychometry and of looking back to some extent into events of the past. The way in which this is sometimes done is shown in the following story, given to us by Dr. Lee, in his *Glimpses of the Supernatural*, vol. ii, p. 146.

#### *The Missing Papers.*

A commercial firm at Bolton, in Lancashire, had found that a considerable sum of money which had been sent to their bank by a confidential clerk had not been



placed to their credit. The clerk remembered the fact of taking the money, though not the particulars, but at the bank nothing was known of it. The clerk, feeling that he was liable to suspicion in the matter, and anxious to elucidate it, sought the help of a spirit-medium. The medium promised to do her best. Having heard the story, she presently passed into a kind of trance. Shortly after, she said: 'I see you go to the bank—I see you go to such and such a part of the bank—I see you hand some papers to a clerk—I see him put them in such and such a place under some other papers—and I see them there now.'

"The clerk went to the bank, directed the cashier where to look for the money, and it was found; the cashier afterwards remembering that in the hurry of business he had there deposited it. A relation of mine saw this story in a newspaper at the time, and wrote to the firm in question, the name of which was given, asking whether the facts were as stated. He was told in reply that they were. The gentleman who was applied to, having corrected one or two unimportant details in the above narration, wrote on November 9, 1874: 'Your account is a correct one. I have the answer of the firm to my enquiry at home now.'"

The description given does not make it absolutely clear whether this was a case of clairvoyance on the part of the medium, or of the use of ordinary faculty by a dead man; but since the medium passed into a trance-condition the latter supposition seems the more probable. The dead man could easily gather from the clerk's mind the earlier part of his story, and thus put himself *en rapport* with the scene; and then by following it to its close he was able to supply the information required. Here is the authenticated record of another good example

of such a case, in which the power of thought-reading is much more prominently exhibited, since all the questions were mental. It is extracted from the *Report on Spiritualism*, published by Longman, London, in 1871, and is to be found in the *Examination of the Master of Lindsay*, p. 215.

*A Lost Will.*

"A friend of mine was very anxious to find the will of his grandmother, who had been dead forty years, but could not even find the certificate of her death. I went with him to the Marshalls', and we had a séance; we sat at a table, and soon the raps came; my friend then asked his questions mentally; he went over the alphabet himself, or sometimes I did so, not knowing the question. We were told (that) the will had been drawn by a man named William Walter, who lived at Whitechapel; the name of the street and the number of the house were given. We went to Whitechapel, found the man, and subsequently, through his aid, obtained a copy of the draft; he was quite unknown to us, and had not always lived in that locality, for he had once seen better days. The medium could not possibly have known anything about the matter, and even if she had, her knowledge would have been of no avail, as all the questions were mental ones."

*Clairvoyant "Readings."*

This power of clairvoyance is also frequently displayed in a minor way at the weekly meetings of which I have spoken. After the trance address is over, the medium usually expresses her readiness to give descriptions, or "readings," as they are often called, of the surroundings of various members of the audience.

Where the circle is a small one, something will be said to each of its members in turn; if there be a large number gathered together, individuals will be selected and called up for special attention.

I have heard striking fragments of private family history brought out in this way—cases which bore every mark of genuineness; but in the majority of such meetings as I have attended the descriptions were exceedingly vague, and had a rather suspicious adaptability about them. The conversation would usually run somewhat along these lines:

*Medium* (supposed to be entranced, but speaking with exactly her normal contempt for aspirates and grammatical rules). "There's an old gent with white 'air a-standin' be'ind that lady in the corner."

*Enthusiastic and Credulous Sitter*. "Lor! that must be my father!"

*Medium*. "Yes; he smiles, he nods his 'ed, he's so pleased that you know him. I can see his white beard regularly shaking, he's so glad."

*Sitter*. "Ain't it wonderful! But father didn't have no beard before he passed over; p'raps he's grown one since, or p'raps it's my uncle Jim; *he* used to have a beard."

*Medium*. "Ah! yes, that's who it is; he nods his 'ed again, and smiles; he wants to tell you 'ow 'appy he is."

*Sitter*. "Well, now! just to think of poor uncle Jim coming like this! Why, it's more than thirty year ago he was drowned at sea, when I was quite a girl; 'an'some young chap he was, too! not more than five-and-twenty, and to be drowned like that!"

*Medium*. "Um! yes—yes—ah! I see him more clearly now—yes, you're right. It's not a white beard—

it's the white undershirt what sailors wears—that's what it is!"

*Chorus.* "How lovely! how wonderful! Ain't it beautiful to think they can come back like this!"

I have heard just about that sort of conversation a score of times; and it is naturally not calculated to produce a very robust faith in that particular medium. Yet perhaps through the very same illiterate woman there would come on another occasion some message about a matter of which she could by no possibility have known anything—a message which she could never have evolved from her sordid consciousness by any amount of clumsy guess-work.

#### *A Private Test.*

I remember on one such occasion applying a little private test of my own to a medium in a poor London suburb. She was a coarse-looking woman, whom I had never seen before, but she seemed earnest enough, though far from cultured. She went on from one member of the circle to another, monotonously describing behind each of them spirits with flowing robes and smiling faces; she varied the story a little in my own case by giving me "a dark-looking foreign gentleman, with something white round his head," which may very possibly have been true enough, or may have been merely a coincidence.

It occurred to me to try whether she could see a thought-form, so as a change from all these reverend white-haired spirits with flowing robes, I set myself to project as strong a mental image as I could construct of two chubby boys in Etons, standing behind the chair of the member of the circle who was next in order for examination. Sure enough, when that person's turn

came, the medium (or the dead man speaking through her, if there was one) described my imaginary boys with tolerable accuracy, and represented them as sons of the lady behind whom they stood. The latter denied this, explaining that her sons were grown men, and the medium then suggested grandchildren, which was also repudiated, so the mystery remained unsolved. But from the incident I deduced two conclusions: First, that either the medium was genuinely clairvoyant or there really was a dead person speaking through her; and secondly, that whoever was concerned had not yet sufficient discernment to distinguish a thought-form materialized on the astral plane from a living astral body.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### PARTIAL MATERIALIZATION.

All the most interesting phenomena of the séance room are connected in some way or other with materialization—that is to say, with the building of physical matter round some astral form, in order that through it the ego inhabiting that astral form may be able to produce results upon the physical plane. But of this materialization there are three varieties. Let me here quote a passage from my own little book upon *The Astral Plane*, p. 118.

“The *habitués* of séances will no doubt have noticed that materializations are of three kinds: First, those which are tangible but not visible; second, those which are visible but not tangible; and third, those which are both visible and tangible. To the first kind, which is much the most common, belong the invisible spirit hands which so frequently stroke the faces of the sitters or carry small objects about the room, and the vocal organs from which the ‘direct voice’ proceeds. In this case an order of matter is being used which can neither reflect nor obstruct light, but which is capable under certain conditions of setting up vibrations in the atmosphere which affect us as sound. A variation of this class is that kind of partial materialization which, though incapable of reflecting any light that we can see, is yet able to affect some of the ultra-violet rays, and can therefore make a more or less definite impression upon the camera, and so provide us with what are known as ‘spirit photographs.’

“When there is not sufficient power available to produce a perfect materialization we sometimes get the vaporous-looking form which constitutes our second class, and in such a case the ‘spirits’ usually warn their sitters that the forms which appear must not be touched. In the rarer case of a full materialization there is sufficient power to hold together, at least for a few moments, a form which can be both seen and touched.”

Nearly all the phenomena coming under this third subdivision of ours are effected by means of the first of these types of materialization, for the hands which cause the raps or tilts, which move objects about the room or raise them from the ground, are not usually visible, though to be able to act thus upon physical matter they must themselves be physical. Occasionally, but comparatively rarely, they may be seen at their work, thus explaining to us how that work is done in the far more numerous instances in which the mechanism is invisible to us. Such a case is given to us by Sir William Crookes, F. R. S., in his very interesting book *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, p. 93:

*A Luminous Hand.*

“I was sitting next to the medium, Miss Fox, the only other persons present being my wife and a lady relative, and I was holding the medium’s two hands in one of mine, whilst her feet were resting on my feet. Paper was on the table before us, and my disengaged hand was holding a pencil. A luminous hand came down from the upper part of the room, and after hovering near me for a few seconds, took the pencil from my hand, rapidly wrote on a sheet of paper, threw the pencil down, and then rose up over our heads, gradually fading into darkness.”

The raps and the tilts are too well known to need description, but cases in which heavy objects are raised and suspended without the contact of visible hands are somewhat less commonly seen, so it may perhaps be well to cite one or two of them. In the book just quoted, on p. 89, Sir William Crookes tells us:

"On five separate occasions, a heavy dining-table rose between a few inches and a foot and a half off the floor, under special circumstances, which rendered trickery impossible. On another occasion a heavy table rose from the floor in full light, while I was holding the medium's hands and feet. On another occasion the table rose from the floor, not only when no person was touching it, but under conditions which I had prearranged so as to assure unquestionable proof of the fact."

It will be seen, therefore, that the similar experience of my own, which I have described a few pages back, is by no means unique. Mr. Robert Dale Owen, in his *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World*, p. 74, gives a remarkable case of similar nature:

#### *Cases of Levitation.*

"In the dining-room of a French nobleman, the Count d'Ourches, residing near Paris, I saw, on the first day of October, 1858, in broad daylight, at the close of *déjeuner à la fourchette*, a dining-table seating seven persons, with fruit and wine on it, rise and settle down, as already described, while all the guests were standing round it, and not one of them touching it at all. All present saw the same thing. Mr. Kyd, son of the late General Kyd, of the British army, and his lady told me (in Paris, in April, 1859) that in December of the year 1857, during an evening visit to a friend, who resided at No. 28 Rue de la Ferme des Mathurins, at Paris,



Mrs. Kyd, seated in an arm-chair, suddenly felt it move, as if some one had laid hold of it from beneath. Then slowly and gradually it rose into the air, and remained there suspended for the space of about thirty seconds, the lady's feet being four or five feet from the ground; then it settled down gently and gradually, so that there was no shock when it reached the carpet. No one was touching the chair when it rose, nor did any one approach it while in the air, except Mr. Kyd, who, fearing an accident, advanced and touched Mrs. Kyd. The room was at the time brightly lighted, as a French *salon* usually is; and of the eight or nine persons present all saw the same thing in the same way. I took notes of the above, as Mr. and Mrs. Kyd narrated to me the occurrence; and they kindly permitted, as a voucher for its truth, the use of their names."

People have not infrequently been lifted in this way in their chairs, though rarely, I fancy, to the height of five feet. Sir William Crookes saw several instances of the same phenomenon, and thus describes them in his *Researches*, p. 89:

"On one occasion I witnessed a chair, with a lady sitting in it, rise several inches from the ground. On another occasion, to avoid the suspicion of this being in some way performed by herself, the lady knelt on the chair in such a manner that its four feet were visible to us. It then rose about three inches, remaining suspended for about ten seconds, and then slowly descended. Another time two children, on separate occasions, rose from the floor with their chairs, in full daylight, under (to me) the most satisfactory conditions; for I was kneeling and keeping close watch upon the feet of the chair, and observing that no one might touch them.

"The most striking cases of levitation which I have

witnessed have been with Mr. Home. On three separate occasions have I seen him raised completely from the floor of the room. Once sitting in an easy chair, once kneeling on his chair, and once standing up. On each occasion I had full opportunity of watching the occurrence as it was taking place.

"There are at least a hundred recorded instances of Mr. Home's rising from the ground, in the presence of as many separate persons, and I have heard from the lips of the three witnesses to the most striking occurrence of this kind—the Earl of Dunraven, Lord Lindsay and Captain C. Wynne—their own most minute accounts of what took place. To reject the recorded evidence on this subject is to reject all human testimony whatever; for no fact in sacred or profane history is supported by a stronger array of proofs." Colonel Olcott, in his *People from the Other World*, also mentions having heard this account from the lips of one of the witnesses. He gives us, too, some very striking instances of levitation upon the part of the Eddy brothers.

I have myself on three occasions been present when the medium, seated in a heavy arm-chair, was lifted clear over our heads as we sat round the table, and placed in the centre of it. On two of these occasions I was myself holding one of the medium's hands, and continued to hold it during his aerial excursion, while a trustworthy friend held the other. Although this took place in darkness, we were therefore certain that no one from the physical plane lifted that chair; though as a matter of fact we did not need that assurance, for there was no one in the room at all capable of such a feat of herculean strength. The moment that the medium and his big chair were safely landed on the table, raps called for a light by the prearranged signal, so that we might see

what had been done; our dead friends being evidently rather proud of their achievement.

*Lifted to the Ceiling.*

I myself was once lifted at a séance in rather an unusual way—at least I have not heard of any other case exactly similar. It was at one of the earliest of the public séances which I attended, and many people entirely unknown to me were present. Some ladies on the opposite side of the table cried out that a hand was patting and caressing them, but this in absolute darkness did not seem to me entirely convincing; so that when their exclamations of delight and gratitude to the “dear spirit” were becoming a little monotonous I asked quietly, “Will the spirit be so kind as to come across and touch *me*?” I had hardly expected any response, but the “spirit” took me promptly at my word; my hand was instantly seized in a strong grasp, and pulled upwards so that I was compelled to rise from my chair. Even when I stood upright, the upward pull still continued, so I hastily stepped on to the seat of my chair. Still the steady irresistible pull, and a moment later I was hanging in the air by one hand, and still ascending. My knuckles touched the smooth, cold surface of the plastered ceiling—the room was a lofty one—and then, apparently *through* the ceiling, another hand patted mine softly, and I felt myself sinking. Directly afterwards my feet touched the chair, and only then the firm grasp loosened, giving me a final hearty hand-shake as it left me. I climbed down from my chair, convinced that “the clasp of a vanished hand” might sometimes be a fairly strong one.

When I told this story to sceptics afterwards I was always met with one of two explanations. First, that

there was a trap-door in that ceiling, and that some mechanical device was employed; secondly, that the medium was standing on the table in the darkness, and lifted me himself. To the first suggestion I reply that the ceiling was plain, smooth, whitewashed plaster, with never a crack in it, for I climbed again upon my chair in full light afterwards to examine it; and though it was some distance beyond my reach, it would have been utterly impossible to miss seeing a crack if one had been there. Besides, my request could not have been foreseen, and arrangements made to grant it in so striking a manner. As to the second hypothesis, the medium was a small, spare man, and I weigh over thirteen stone; perhaps the sceptic who suggests this would himself stand upon the edge of a circular dining-table with one central support, and then with one hand lift a much heavier man than himself straight up above his own head, holding him suspended merely by one of his hands all the while.

*True Levitation.*

The probabilities are that all the cases of lifting which I have quoted or described were performed by materialized hands, just as in this last experience of my own. There is quite another method of levitation which is occasionally practised in Oriental countries—a much more occult and scientific method, dependent for its success upon the knowledge and use of a power of repulsion which balances the action of gravitation. I have also seen that, and indeed every student of practical magic is familiar with its employment; but it does not seem to me at all probable that this power was called into requisition in any of the above cases.

Gravitation is in fact a force of a magnetic nature, and may be reversed and changed into repulsion, just as

ordinary magnetism can be. Such a reversal of this peculiar type of magnetism can be produced at will by one who has learnt its secret, but it has also frequently been produced unintentionally by ecstasies of various types. It is related, for example, both of S. Teresa and of S. Joseph of Cupertino that they were often thus levitated while engaged in meditation. But I fancy that those who are levitated at a spiritualistic séance are generally simply upborne by the materialized hands of the dead.

These same materialized hands manage all the smaller business of the séance; they wind up the perennial musical box and wave it over the heads of the sitters; they play (and sometimes very sweetly) upon that curious kind of miniature zither which is usually euphoniously termed "fairy bells"; they sprinkle water or perfume sometimes; they bring flowers and fruits and even lumps of sugar, which I have known them deftly to insert into the mouths of their friends.

It is usually they also that are employed in slate-writing, though this may sometimes be managed still more rapidly by means of precipitation, to which we shall make reference presently. But generally the fragment of pencil enclosed between the slates is guided by a hand, of which only just the tiny points sufficient to grasp it are materialized.

#### *A Slate-Writing Séance.*

One well known medium in London used to carry this slate-writing to a very high degree of perfection some twenty years ago. It was the finest possible performance to which to take the bigoted sceptic, who boasted that nothing ever happened or would happen while *he* was present. One would make an appointment

with the medium for eleven o'clock on a bright summer morning; one would take the sceptic into a stationer's shop on the way and make him buy two ordinary school slates, put a tiny crumb of slate-pencil between them (or sometimes two or three fragments of different colours) and then have them packed up in brown paper and strongly tied. One would then purchase a stick of the best sealing wax and request the sceptic to seal the string with his own seal in as many places as he wished—the more the better—and on no account whatever to allow that parcel to go out of his hands.

Then we should proceed to the medium's house and commence the séance, cautioning the sceptic to sit upon his parcel of slates in order to make sure that they were not tampered with. The medium commenced operations with slates of his own, which were always lying upon the table for examination before the séance began; and the sceptic had usually elaborate theories about these, as to how messages had already been written upon them, and washed out with alcohol so that they would presently reappear; or else that of course they would presently be dropped out of sight and others substituted for them by sleight-of-hand. It was best as a rule to let him talk, and take no notice, knowing that one could afford to bide one's time.

The medium would hold a single slate pressed against the under surface of the table with one hand—a little plain wooden table with no drawers, and obviously no contrivance of any sort about it—not even a cloth upon it. Under these conditions answers would be written to any simple question, or any sentence dictated would be faithfully taken down. Here the sceptic would usually interpose by requesting that a sentence might be written in Sanskrit or Chinese or the Cherokee dialect, and would

be hugely triumphant if the controlling "spirit" confessed that he did not happen to know these languages. Occasionally he would fetch somebody who did know them, and then the sceptic would be somewhat staggered, though he still clung to the idea that somehow or other the whole thing was a fraud.

Presently, however, when the séance got into full swing, one would insinuatingly ask the directing entities whether they could write upon our own slates; and though I have once or twice been told that they feared the power was not sufficient, in three cases out of four the reply would be in the affirmative. Then one turned to the sceptic and requested him to produce his parcel, asking him to examine the seals so as to be perfectly certain that it had not been touched. He would then be courteously requested to hold the sealed parcel in his own hands above the table, the medium perhaps taking hold of one corner of it, or perhaps merely laying his hand lightly upon it. Then the sceptic would be requested to formulate a mental question, but on no account to give any indication as to its nature. He would do this, and it was generally an interesting study to watch the expression of his face when he heard the sound of rapid writing going on in the parcel between his hands. In a few moments three quick taps would signify that the message was finished, and the medium would remove his hand, gravely asking the sceptic to examine his seals and make sure that they were intact.

He would then cut his parcel open, and find the inside surfaces of his new slates covered with fine writing on the subject of his mental question. Usually for the time he was speechless, and went home to think it over; but by the end of the week he had generally made up his mind that we had been in some inexplicable way de-

ceived or hallucinated, and that "of course we did not really see what we thought we saw." Nevertheless it was a hard nut to crack, and his frequent references later to "that clever but ridiculous performance" would show that it remained in his mind, and had perhaps done him more good than he was willing to own.

The answers given in this way would often display considerable intelligence and knowledge. It appeared to me, however, that they were often considerably modified by decided opinions on the part of the questioner—whether from a friendly desire to please him, or because the ideas were largely a reflection of those in his own mind, there was not sufficient evidence to show. For example, I remember myself receiving a perfectly definite statement regarding the existence of certain persons in whom I was very deeply interested; the communicating entity not only positively asserted this existence, but adopted towards them precisely my own attitude. Yet I afterwards discovered that only a week previously what professed to be the very same entity had, in writing answers for another person, totally denied that any such personages existed at all! It may have been that here we had to deal with two entirely different communicating entities, one masquerading for some reason or other under the name and title of the other; but it is at least significant that in each case the opinion expressed agreed precisely with that of the questioner. On the other hand, I am bound to admit that in many cases the answers given were not at all what any of us would have expected, and contained information which could by no possibility have been known to any of those present.

It is not difficult to see why this slate-writing should be one of the easiest forms of conveying a message, and indeed the only kind of writing that can readily be per-



formed in full daylight. For the fact is that it never is performed in daylight, even though the surrounding conditions are so absolutely satisfactory to us. Between the two slates or between the slate and the table there is always the darkness which makes materialization easy. When a physical body is slowly grown and built together in the ordinary way, when it is thoroughly permeated by the vital principle and definitely energized by the spirit, it becomes a relatively permanent organism, and can withstand the impact of vibrations from without, within certain limits.

We must remember that materialization is a mere imitation of this—a mere concourse of fortuitous atoms, temporarily held together in opposition to the ordinary laws and arrangements of nature. It therefore needs to be constantly held together with care and difficulty, and any violent vibration striking it from without would very readily break it up. It must also be remembered that the matter employed in materialization is almost all withdrawn from the body of the medium, and is therefore subject to a strong attraction which is constantly drawing it back to him. The very strong and rapid vibrations of ordinary light will therefore dissolve a materialization almost instantaneously, except under very exceptional circumstances.

It can be maintained for some time in presence of a very faint light such as that given by gas turned very low, or by what is called a "luminous slate," which is usually a piece of wood or cardboard coated with luminous paint, and exposed to the sun during the day, so that at night it may give out a faint phosphorescent radiance. It is, however, among the resources of the astral plane to produce a soft light the effect of which seems to be far less violent; and in this it is sometimes

possible for the hand which writes to maintain its corporeal existence for a considerable period, as is evidenced by the following extract from a description of a séance held with Kate Fox by Mr. Livermore on August 18, 1861.

*An Hour's Writing.*

"The cards became the centre of a circle of light a foot in diameter. Carefully watching this phenomenon, I saw the hand holding my pencil over one of the cards. This hand moved quietly across from left to right, and when one line was finished, moved back to commence another. At first it was a perfectly shaped hand; afterwards it became a dark substance, smaller than the human hand, but still apparently holding the pencil, the writing going on at intervals, and the whole remaining visible for nearly an hour. I can conceive of no better evidence for the reality of spirit-writing. Every possible precaution against deception had been taken. I held both hands of the medium throughout the whole time. I have the cards still, minutely written on both sides; the sentiments there expressed being of the most elevated character, pure and spiritual." (*The Debatable Land*, p. 301.)

This account gives us an example of the difficulty, even under these exceptionally favourable conditions, of maintaining a materialization for so long a period. It seems to have been impossible to preserve the shape of the hand, but something visible which could still hold and guide the pencil was somehow kept together until the necessary work was finished.

*Direct Painting.*

I have also seen some very good specimens of painting which were probably executed in the same manner as the writing above described. I say probably, because

as they were executed in darkness, it is impossible to be absolutely certain; they may have been precipitations, although as that is a more difficult process, I do not think that it is likely to have been employed. There have been certain mediums who have made a specialty of this production of pictures, and it is certainly a very pleasing exhibition of astral power. I have twice seen a little landscape, perhaps eight inches by five, produced in total darkness on a marked piece of paper in from fifteen to twenty minutes. The execution was very fair, the colours were natural and harmonious, and some of the paint was still wet when the lights were turned up. I am perfectly certain that the sheet of paper employed was in each case that which I brought with me. In one case, just before the lights were turned down, I tore a curiously jagged fragment off one of the corners of the piece and kept it in my own possession until the picture was completed, and found when the lights were turned up that it fitted exactly into the tear in the sheet upon which the landscape was drawn.

In neither of these cases was the landscape one which I recognized, though at the house of the same medium I have seen well-executed paintings of scenes with which I was familiar, which I was told had been produced in exactly the same manner. In both of these cases a box of water-colours, a palette and brushes were provided, and after the séance they bore signs of having been used. I have also on another occasion, and with a different medium, seen a very much larger drawing in coloured chalks produced in darkness in even less time, but in this case the execution, though bold and dashing, was certainly crude and erratic. The subject in this case was a lady's head, and the likeness was recognizable, though not flattering. On all these occasions it was absolutely

certain that the medium was in no way concerned in the production of the pictures, his hands being held during the whole time, and the outline of his form being sufficiently visible in two of the cases to prevent him from moving without instant detection.

*Musical Performances.*

A man who has attained facility during life in the management of any kind of instrument does not lose his power when he drops his physical body. I have heard both a violin and a flute played fairly well by invisible hands, when there was light enough to see that the instruments were not being touched by any of the persons present in the physical body. I have also on many occasions seen a concertina played in the same way, sometimes while I myself held the other end of the instrument. Many times also a piano has been played in my presence by invisible hands, and in this case it seemed to make no difference whether the lid enclosing the key-board was open or shut. Sometimes, before beginning to play, the dead man would dash back the lid, and in that case we could see the keys depressed as the playing went on precisely as though operated upon by our own hands. If during the performance we closed the piano, the playing usually went on just as if it had remained open. On two occasions I have heard the wires of a piano played without moving the keys, just as the strings of a harp might be.

Another instance of a man who after death retained his power to operate an instrument to which he had been accustomed during life is given by Sir William Crookes on p. 95 of his book. The operator was not exactly using his instrument, but he undoubtedly showed that he

still possessed the power to do so, had the instrument been there. The story is as follows:

*The Telegraph Operator.*

"During a séance with Mr. Home, a small lath, which I have before mentioned, moved across the table to me, in the light, and delivered a message to me by tapping my hand; I repeating the alphabet, and the lath tapping me at the right letters. The other end of the lath was resting on the table, some distance from Mr. Home's hands.

"The taps were so sharp and clear, and the lath was evidently so well under control of the invisible power which was governing its movements, that I said, 'Can the intelligence governing the motion of this lath change the character of the movements, and give me a telegraphic message through the Morse alphabet by taps on my hand?' (I have every reason to believe that the Morse code was quite unknown to any other person present, and it was only imperfectly known to me.) Immediately I said this, the character of the taps changed, and the message was continued in the way I had requested. The letters were given too rapidly for me to do more than catch a word here and there, and consequently I lost the message; but I heard sufficient to convince me that there was a good Morse operator at the other end of the line, wherever that might be."

*The Direct Voice.*

In the case of the flute above mentioned it is obvious that the performer must have materialized not only finger-tips to press the keys, but also a mouth with which to blow. It is by no means uncommon at a séance for the dead man to materialize vocal organs sufficiently to

produce intelligible sound, though this appears to be (as indeed one would naturally suppose) a much more difficult feat than the materialization of a hand. Very often the construction of such organs seems to be imperfect, and the resulting voice is a hoarse whistling whisper. I think almost invariably the first attempts of an unaccustomed ghost to materialize a voice go no further than the softest of whispers; but on the other hand the "spirit guide" of a regular medium, having practised the art of materializing organs and speaking through them many hundreds of times, often possesses a perfectly natural and characteristic voice.

All those who have been in the habit of attending the séances of certain well-known mediums during the last quarter of a century must be familiar with the round, sonorous voice of the director who elects to be known by the name of "John King," and the hearty, friendly manner in which he greets those whom he has come to know and trust. I well remember an occasion when, having invited a medium down to my cottage in the country, we were walking together across a wheat-field, and a well-known "spirit-voice" joined in our conversation in the most natural way in the world, just exactly as if a third person had been walking with us.

I am quite aware that the ordinary explanation of a "spirit-voice" is that it is an effort of ventriloquism on the part of the medium, but when one recognizes the voice as one well known in earth-life that explanation seems a trifle unsatisfactory. Also it seems to me to fail to account for the fact that on one occasion, at a séance in my own house, the unseen performers treated us to a song in which all four parts were distinctly audible, two of them being taken by very good female voices—and that although the medium was of the male sex (and

in a deep trance anyhow) and none but men (trusted friends of my own) were physically present in the room.

Under this head of partial materialization we must also include what are sometimes called "spirit photographs"; for whatever can be photographed must of course be physical matter, capable of reflecting some of the rays of light which can act upon the sensitized plate of the camera. It does not at all follow that it need be composed of matter visible to us, for the camera is sensitive to a large range of actinic ultra-violet rays which produce no impression whatever upon our eyes as at present constituted.

I know enough of photography to realize how easily a so-called "spirit-photograph" could be produced by trickery, but I also know that there are a great many which were as a matter of fact *not* so produced. I have seen a very large number of those which were taken under test conditions for Mr. W. T. Stead when he was investigating this curious form of mediumship, and I have also been favoured with a sight of several of those taken by and for our own Vice-President.

#### *An Interesting Photograph.*

A good typical case of this photography of the partially materialized dead was related to me by a veteran army officer. It seems that he had lost (as we usually call it) three daughters by death, within a comparatively short space of time. One day in a large city, hundreds of miles from home, he saw an advertisement of a photographer who professed to be able to produce portraits of the dead, so he turned into his studio then and there, and asked to be taken. He gave no indication of what he expected, or indeed that he expected anything at all beyond his own portrait; and he asserts that it was ab-

solutely impossible that he could have been in any way known to the photographer. Yet when he called for the portraits three floating faces appeared grouped about his own, fainter than his, but unmistakably recognizable. He showed me the photograph, and also the portraits of his daughters taken during their physical life; they were unquestionably the same young ladies as those in the picture taken after their death.

It seems probable that the working of the little board called planchette is sometimes accomplished by means of a partial materialization, for I have seen cases in which it distinctly moved underneath the fingers which were resting upon it, and was in no way moved by them. When it is clearly the hand which moves the board, this phenomenon of course belongs to our first class, in which the body of the medium is utilized, though that medium may be entirely unconscious of what is being done.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

### MISCELLANEOUS PHENOMENA.

I have already mentioned in connection with the phenomenal production of paintings or writings that there is another method by which this may be done, more rapid and efficient, but requiring greater knowledge of the possibilities of the astral plane. This method is usually described as precipitation, and broadly speaking its *modus operandi* is as follows:

The man wishing to write or paint will take a sheet of paper, form a clear mental image of the writing or the picture distinct down to the minutest detail, and will then by an effort of will objectify that image and throw it upon the paper, so that the whole picture or the whole sheet of writing will appear instantaneously. It will be seen at once that this demands far greater power and fuller command of resources than is likely to be possessed by the ordinary man either before or after his death; but just as those who have been trained along that line are capable of producing such a result while still in the physical body, so there are a few among the dead who have learnt how such powers may be exercised.

I have seen cases in which the writing was precipitated not all at once but by degrees, so that it appeared upon the paper in successive words, just as it would have done if written in the ordinary way, except that this process was very much more rapid than any writing could ever be. In the same way I have seen a picture form itself slowly, beginning at one side and passing steadily across to the other, the effect being just as

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though a sheet of paper which had concealed it was slowly drawn off from an already existing picture.

Some persons in performing this feat require to have their materials provided for them; that is to say, if they have to write a letter, the writing material—ink or coloured chalk—must be by their side, or if they have to precipitate a picture the colours must be there either in powder or already moistened. In this case the operator simply disintegrates as much of the material as he requires, and transfers it to the surface of his paper. A more accomplished performer, however, can gather together such material as he needs from the surrounding ether; that is to say, he is practically able to create his materials, and so can sometimes produce results which cannot readily be imitated by any means at our disposal upon the physical plane.

The next point for our consideration is the question of what are called “spirit lights”, that is to say, the different varieties of illumination which are produced at a séance by the non-physical participators therein. Sir William Crookes gives a comprehensive catalogue of these on p. 91 of his book before quoted.

#### *Various Kinds of Lights.*

“Under the strictest test conditions I have seen a solid self-luminous body, the size and nearly the shape of a turkey’s egg, float noiselessly about the room, at one time higher than any one present could reach standing on tip-toe, and then gently descend to the floor. It was visible for more than ten minutes; and before it faded away it struck the table three times, with a sound like that of a hard solid body. During this time the medium was lying back, apparently insensible, in an easy chair.

“I have seen luminous points of light darting about

and settling on the heads of different persons; I have had questions answered by the flashing of a bright light a desired number of times in front of my face. I have seen sparks of light rising from the table to the ceiling; and again falling upon the table, striking it with an audible sound. I have had an alphabetic communication given by luminous flashes occurring before me in the air, whilst my hand was moving about amongst them. I have seen a luminous cloud floating upwards to a picture. Under the strictest test conditions, I have more than once had a solid, self-luminous, crystalline body placed in my hand by a hand which did not belong to any person in the room. In the light, I have seen a luminous cloud hover over a heliotrope on a side table, break a sprig off, and carry the sprig to a lady; and on some occasions I have seen a similar luminous cloud visibly condense to the form of a hand, and carry small objects about."

I have already described the three varieties of lights which showed themselves to me during my preliminary home experiments without a recognized medium; and though I have seen many such lights since, they have been almost all of the same general character as those. On several occasions, however, I have seen a light much brighter than any of those, apparently of an electrical character, capable of fully lighting up the room, and in one case of blinding brilliancy. This latter manifestation is very rare at a séance, as, for reasons previously described, it would break up any partial materializations which might be necessary for the production of other phenomena.

Another interesting power at the command of experimenters on the astral plane is that of disintegration and of reintegration, to which we have already referred when

speaking of precipitation. This is simply the process of reducing any object to an impalpable powder—in fact, into an etheric or even atomic condition. This may be brought about by the action of extremely rapid vibration, which overcomes the cohesion of the molecules of the object operated upon. A still higher rate of vibration, perhaps of a somewhat different type, will further separate these molecules into their constituent atoms. A body thus reduced to the etheric or atomic condition can be moved with very great rapidity from one place to another; and the moment that the force which has been exerted to bring it into that condition is withdrawn, it will at once resume its original state.

*How Form Is Retained.*

To answer an obvious objection which will at once occur to the mind of the reader I may be allowed to quote once more a few sentences from *The Astral Plane*.

“Students often at first find it difficult to understand how in such an experiment the shape of the article dealt with can be preserved. It has been remarked that if any metallic object—say, for example, a key—be melted and raised to a vaporous state by heat, when the heat is withdrawn it will certainly return to the solid state, but it will no longer be a key, but merely a lump of metal. The point is well taken, though as a matter of fact the apparent analogy does not hold good. The elemental essence which informs the key would be dissipated by the alteration in its condition—not that the essence itself can be affected by the action of heat, but that when its temporary body is destroyed (as a solid) it pours back into the great reservoir of such essence, much as the higher principles of a man, though entirely unaffected by

heat or cold, are yet forced out of a physical body when it is destroyed by fire.

“Consequently, when what had been the key cooled down into the solid condition again, the elemental essence (of the ‘earth’ or solid class) which poured back into it would not be in any way the same as that which it contained before, and there would be no reason why the same shape should be retained. But a man who disintegrated a key for the purpose of removing it by astral currents from one place to another would be very careful to hold the same elemental essence in exactly the same shape until the transfer was completed, and then when his will-force was removed it would act as a mould into which the solidifying particles would flow, or rather round which they would be re-aggregated. Thus unless the operator’s power of concentration failed, the shape would be accurately preserved.

“It is in this way that objects are sometimes brought almost instantaneously from great distances at spiritualistic séances, and it is obvious that when disintegrated they could be passed with perfect ease through any solid substance, such, for example, as the wall of a house or the side of a locked box, so that what is commonly called ‘the passage of matter through matter’ is seen, when properly understood, to be as simple as the passage of water through a sieve, or of a gas through a liquid in some chemical experiment.

“Since it is possible by an alteration of vibrations to change matter from the solid to the etheric condition, it will be comprehended that it is also possible to reverse the process and to bring etheric matter into the solid state. As the one process explains the phenomenon of disintegration, so does the other that of materialization; and just as in the former case a continued effort of will

is necessary to prevent the object from resuming its original state, so in exactly the same way in the latter phenomenon a continued effort is necessary to prevent the materialized matter from relapsing into the etheric condition."

*Objects Brought from a Distance.*

The apport of objects from some other room, or sometimes from a far greater distance, is one of the most favourite methods by which the dead men managing a séance elect to manifest their especially astral powers. Sir William Crookes, on p. 97 of the book which I have so often quoted, tells us how at a séance with Miss Kate Fox the controlling entities announced that "they were going to bring something to show their power," and then brought into the room a small hand-bell from the library, the door between being carefully locked, and the key in Sir William's pocket.

I have myself very frequently had all sorts of small objects brought to me from a distance—flowers and fruit being among the most common. In some cases tropical flowers and fruit, obviously perfectly fresh, have been thus presented to me in England. When interrogated as to whence these things came, the controlling entities have always most emphatically asserted that they were not permitted to steal any person's property in this way, but had to search for their flowers and fruits where they grew wild. I have had a rare fern and a rare orchid brought to me in this way—thrown down upon the table with the fresh earth still clinging to their roots. I was able to plant both of them afterwards in my garden, where they took root and grew in the most natural manner.

The best stories that I know of the bringing of

plants to a séance are contained in Madame d'Espérance's book *Shadowland*. The first is quoted from p. 261. (It should be premised that "Yolande" is the name given to a materialized "spirit" who took a very prominent part in all the séances of Madame d'Espérance.)

"Yolande crossed the room to where Mr. Reimers sat, a gentleman well known throughout Europe as a prominent spiritualist, and beckoned him to go nearer the cabinet and witness some preparations she was about to make. Here it is as well to say that on previous occasions when Yolande had produced flowers for us, she had given us to understand that sand and water were necessary for the purpose, consequently a supply of fine clean white sand and plenty of water were kept in readiness for possible contingencies. When Yolande, accompanied by Mr. Reimers, came to the centre of the circle, she signified her wish for sand and water, and, making Mr. R. kneel down on the floor beside her, she directed him to pour sand into the water-carafe, which he did until it was about half full. Then he was instructed to pour in water. This was done, and then by her direction he shook it well and handed it back to her.

"Yolande, after scrutinizing it carefully, placed it on the floor, covering it lightly with the drapery which she took from her shoulders. She then retired to the cabinet, from which she returned once or twice at short intervals, as though to see how it was getting on.

"In the meantime Mr. Armstrong had carried away the superfluous water and sand, leaving the carafe standing in the middle of the floor covered by the thin veil, which, however, did not in the least conceal its shape, the ring or top edge being especially visible.

"We were directed by raps on the floor to sing, in order to harmonize our thoughts, and to take off the

edge, as it were, of the curiosity we were all more or less feeling.

"While we were singing we observed the drapery to be rising from the rim of the carafe. This was perfectly patent to every one of the twenty witnesses watching it closely.

"Yolande came out again from the cabinet and regarded it anxiously. She appeared to examine it carefully, and partially supported the drapery as though afraid of its crushing some tender object underneath. Finally she raised it altogether, exposing to our astonished gaze a perfect plant, of what appeared to be a kind of laurel.

"Yolande raised the carafe, in which the plant seemed to have firmly grown; its roots, visible through the glass, being closely packed in the sand.

"She regarded it with evident pride and pleasure, and, carrying it in both her hands, crossed the room and presented it to Mr. Oxley, one of the strangers who were present—the Mr. Oxley who is so well known by his philosophical writings on spiritual subjects, and the pyramids of Egypt.

"He received the carafe with the plant, and Yolande retired as though she had completed her task. After examining the plant Mr. Oxley, for convenience' sake, placed it on the floor beside him, there being no table near at hand. Many questions were asked and curiosity ran high. The plant resembled a large-leaved laurel with dark glossy leaves, but without any blossom. No one present recognized the plant or could assign it to any known species.

"We were called to order by raps, and were told not to discuss the matter, but to sing something and then be quiet. We obeyed the command, and after singing, more raps told us to examine the plant anew, which we



were delighted to do. To our great surprise we then observed that a large circular head of bloom, forming a flower fully five inches in diameter, had opened itself, while standing on the floor at Mr. Oxley's feet.

"The flower was of a beautiful orange-pink colour, or perhaps I might say that salmon-colour would be a nearer description, for I have never seen the same tints, and it is difficult to describe shades of colour in words.

"The head was composed of some hundred and fifty four-star corollas projecting considerably from the stem. The plant was twenty-two inches in height, having a thick woody stem which filled the neck of the water-carafe. It had twenty-nine leaves, averaging from two to two and a half inches in breadth, and seven and a half inches at their greatest length. Each leaf was smooth and glossy, resembling at the first glance the laurel which we had first supposed it to be. The fibrous roots appeared to be growing naturally in the sand.

"We afterwards photographed the plant in the water-bottle, from which, by the way, it was found impossible to remove it, the neck being much too small to allow the roots to pass; indeed, the comparatively slender stem entirely filled the orifice.

"The name, we learned, was *Ixora Crocata*, and the plant a native of India.

"How did the plant come there? Did it grow in the bottle? Had it been brought from India in a dematerialized state and rematerialized in the séance-room?

"These were questions which we put to one another without result. We got no satisfactory explanation. Yolande either could not or would not tell us. As far as we could judge—and the opinion of a professional gardener corroborated our own—the plant had evidently some years of growth.

"We could see where other leaves had grown and fallen off, and wound-marks which seemed to have healed and grown over long ago. But there was every evidence to show that the plant had grown in the sand in the bottle, as the roots were naturally wound around the inner surface of the glass, all the fibres perfect and unbroken as though they had germinated on the spot and had apparently never been disturbed. It had not been thrust into the bottle, for the simple reason that it was impossible to pass the large fibrous roots and lower part of the stem through the neck of the bottle, which had to be broken to take out the plant."

Mr. Oxley, in his account, which was afterwards published, says: "I had the plant photographed next morning, and afterwards brought it home and placed it in my conservatory under the gardener's care. It lived for three months, when it shrivelled up. I kept the leaves, giving most of them away except the flower and the three top-leaves which the gardener cut off when he took charge of the plant; these I have yet preserved under glass, but they show no signs of dematerializing as yet. Previous to the creation or materialization of this wonderful plant, the *Ixora Crocata*, Yolande brought me a rose with a short stem not more than an inch long, which I put into my bosom. Feeling something was transpiring, I drew it out and found there were two roses. I then replaced them, and withdrawing them at the conclusion of the meeting, to my astonishment the stem had elongated to seven inches, with three full-blown roses and a bud upon it, with several thorns. These I brought home and kept till they faded, the leaves dropped off and the stem dried up, a proof of their materiality and actuality."

We gather from further statements that this interest-

ing present was made to Mr. Oxley in fulfilment of a promise, for it seems that he was making a collection of plants in order to demonstrate some theory, for which he needed a specimen of this particular kind, but had been unable to obtain it by any ordinary method. The remarkable point about the arrival of this plant is its gradual appearance. It is not brought as a whole and thrown down upon the table, as my fern was, but it is seen to be slowly increasing under the drapery, precisely as though it were really growing at a most abnormal rate; and even after it has been presented to Mr. Oxley it still continues this apparent growth, for it develops a flower during the singing.

It seems, however, evident that this apparent growth is not really anything of the kind, since the plant is seen on examination to be clearly several years old; so we are driven to the conclusion that the plant was, as it were, brought over in sections and built up gradually. If a living plant can be dematerialized and put together again without damaging it permanently, it may just as easily be taken to pieces bit by bit as pulverized at one blow by a mightier effort of will; indeed, one can easily see how the former might be much the simpler process, demanding far less expenditure of force. It may quite conceivably not have been within the power of those who were assisting Yolande to bring the entire vegetable at one fell swoop, and it may therefore have been absolutely necessary to make several journeys for it. It would appear that they first arranged the roots in the sand, disposing them with care exactly as they had naturally grown, and then gradually added the rest of the plant, bringing the flower over later with dramatic effect as the crowning glory of the experiment.

It may be that the apparently rapid growth of the

mango-tree in the celebrated Indian feat of magic is managed in this same manner, by successive acts of disintegration and reintegration, instead of by enormously hastening the ordinary processes of development, as is usually suggested. Clearly, as the author remarks, it could not have been thrust into the bottle, but particle by particle had been carefully arranged in the proper place among the damp sand. The operation must have been a difficult and delicate one, and we can hardly wonder that Yolande regarded the eventual result with considerable pride.

Mr. Oxley seemed to have regarded the plant as a temporary materialization, and expected that it would disappear in due course; but it is quite evident that it was definitely a case of apport, and that the gift was intended to remain, as indeed it did until its death, which, however, may quite possibly have been accelerated by its abrupt removal from warmer climes to the inclement latitude of England. The photograph taken of the plant in the bottle is reproduced as one of the illustrations in the book from which this account is extracted. It seems clear that the rose to which Mr. Oxley refers must also have been brought piecemeal in the same way, since it would obviously be impossible for a cut flower to grow in the way which he describes.

In the same book, at p. 326, we find an account of a still more wonderful achievement of the same nature on the part of Yolande. In this case there is the additional and interesting complication that the plant was only borrowed, and had to be returned.

"Yolande, with the assistance of Mr. Aksakof, had mixed sand and loam in the flower-pot, and she had covered it with her veil, as she had done in the case of

the water-bottle in England when the *Ixora Crocata* was grown.

"The white drapery was seen to rise slowly but steadily, widening out as it grew higher and higher. Yolande stood by and manipulated the gossamer-like covering till it reached a height far above her head, when she carefully removed it, disclosing a tall plant bowed with a mass of heavy blossom, which emitted the strong sweet scent I had complained of.

"Notes were taken of its size, and it was found to be seven feet in length from root to point, or about a foot and a half taller than myself. Even when bent by the weight of the eleven large blossoms it bore, it was taller than I. The flowers were very perfect, measuring eight inches in diameter; five were fully blown, three were just opening and three in bud, all without spot or blemish, and damp with dew. It was most lovely, but somehow the scent of lilies since that evening has always made me feel faint.

"Yolande seemed very pleased with her success and told us that if we wanted to photograph the lily we were to do so, as she must take it away again. She stood beside it and Mr. Boutlerof photographed it and her twice."

The plant was a *Lilium auratum*, the golden-rayed lily of Japan, and the date of this very interesting séance was June 28, 1890. The photographs mentioned are reproduced in the book, and show a very fine specimen of the plant.

A curious feature of the account is that the materialized figure Yolande became very anxious about the affair because, having apparently borrowed this giant lily, she found herself unable to return it at the proper time. The available power seems to have been exhausted in the

effort of bringing it, so that when she tried to take it back again she failed. She appears to have been much distressed at her inability to keep her promise, and begged that every care might be taken of the plant. Her physical friends did all that they could for it, but it seems (and no wonder) to have languished somewhat. The weather, too, proved unfavourable for her purposes, and it was nearly a week before she finally succeeded in restoring it to its original owner, whoever he may have been. One would like to hear the other side of this story—the surprise and regret at the mysterious disappearance from somebody's garden or conservatory of so magnificent a specimen, and their equal but much pleasanter astonishment over its inexplicable reappearance a week later, when probably all hope of tracing the thieves had been abandoned!

The question of the influence of weather on the production of psychic phenomena is one of considerable interest. It is evident that electrical disturbances of any sort present difficulties in the way of attempts at either materialization or disintegration, presumably for the same reason that bright light renders them almost impossible—the destructive effect of strong vibration. It is quite conceivable that while the air was full of strong electrical vibrations Yolande may have found it impossible safely to carry her disintegrated vegetable matter from one place to another, lest it should be so shaken up and disarranged that restoration to its original form might become difficult or impracticable.

In very many cases of the apport of objects from a distance the fourth-dimensional method is obviously the easiest, though in these efforts of Yolande's it would seem from the gradual growth of the plant that it was not employed. But there are very many instances

of which it offers the neatest and readiest explanation. There are nearly always several ways in which almost any phenomenon can be produced, and it is often not easy to determine merely from a written account which of them was actually employed in a given case.

Another instance either of the passage of matter through matter, or of the employment of fourth-dimensional power, is given when a solid iron ring too small to go over the hand is passed on to one's wrist. This has three times been done to me, and in each case I had to trust to our dead friends for its removal, since it would have been quite impossible to get it off by any physical means except filing. I have also again and again had the back of a chair hung over my arm while I was grasping the hand of the medium. Once I watched that process in a moderately good light, and though the phenomenon was very quickly performed it yet seemed to me that I saw part of the back of the chair fade into a sort of mist as it approached my arm. But in a moment it had passed round or through my arm and was again solid as ever.

A much rarer phenomenon at a séance, so far as my experience goes, is that of reduplication. When it does occur, this is produced simply by forming a perfect mental image of the object to be copied, and then gathering about it the necessary astral and physical matter. For this purpose it is needful that every particle, interior as well as exterior, of the object to be duplicated should be held accurately in view simultaneously, and consequently the phenomenon is one which requires considerable power of concentration to perform. Persons unable to extract the matter required directly from the surrounding ether have sometimes

taken it from the material of the original article, which in this case would be correspondingly reduced in weight.

*A Fiery Test.*

Another striking but not very common feat displayed occasionally at a séance is that of handling fire unharmed. On one occasion at a séance in London a materialized form deliberately put his hand into the midst of a brightly burning fire, picked out a lump of red-hot coal nearly as large as a tennis-ball, and held it out to me, saying quickly "Take it in your hand."

I hesitated for a moment, perhaps not unnaturally, but an impatient movement on the part of the dead man decided me. I felt that he probably knew what he was about, that this was perhaps a unique opportunity, and that if it burnt me I could drop it before much harm was done. So I held out my hand and the glowing mass was promptly deposited in my palm. I can testify that I felt not even the slightest warmth from it, though when the dead man immediately took a sheet of paper from the mantelpiece and applied it to the coal, the paper blazed up in a moment. I held this lump of coal for a minute and a half, when, as it was rapidly growing dull, he motioned to me to throw it back into the fire. Not the slightest mark or redness remained upon my hand—nothing but a little ash—nor was there any smell of burning.

Now how was this done? I could not in the least understand at the time, and could get no intelligible theory out of the presiding entities. I know now from later occult studies that the thinnest layer of etheric substance can be so manipulated as to make it absolutely impervious to heat, and I assume that probably my hand was for the moment covered with such a layer, since that



is perhaps the easiest way of producing the result. Be that as it may, I can certify that the event occurred exactly as described.

It is within the resources of the astral plane to produce fire as well as to counteract its effect. I have seen this done only once myself, and then as a special "test" to prove that spontaneous combustion was a possibility, but from the accounts given by Mr. Morell Theobald in *Spirit Workers in the Home Circle* it would appear that with him the phenomenon was quite an ordinary one. The deceased members of his household seem to have taken almost as great a part in its work as the living members did, and to light the family fires spontaneously was one of the least of their achievements. Their action in this respect is said to have been paralleled on several occasions in Scotland by the brownies, a variety of nature spirits or fairies, but I have not at hand the particulars of any case for quotation.

#### *The Production of Fire.*

My own experience in this line was at a séance in England. We were directed by raps to procure a large flat dish, place it in the middle of the table and make in it a little pile of shavings and of the fragments of a cigar box. We obeyed, and were then directed to turn out the lights and sing. We sat solemnly round the table holding hands and singing in total darkness for what seemed at least half an hour, though it may have been less than that in reality. Towards the end of that time a curious dull red glow showed itself in the heart of our loosely-built pile of wood, waxing and waning several times, but eventually bursting into flame. It is quite certain that none of us touched the pile or indeed could have touched it without the connivance of several others, sit-

ting as we were; and it is also certain that the combustion commenced in a manner entirely precluding the idea of its being set in motion from outside by a match.

I infer, since heat is after all simply a certain rate of vibration, that it is only necessary for the astral entities to set up and maintain that particular rate of vibration, and combustion must ensue; and this is most probably what was done. An obvious alternative would be to introduce fourth-dimensionally a tiny fragment of already glowing matter, such as tinder, for example, and then blow upon it until it burst into flame; or again, chemical combinations which would produce combustion could easily be introduced. There are plenty of stories told in India about the way in which spontaneous fires break out in certain villages if the village deity is neglected, and does not receive his expected offerings; so it is evident that the production of fire presents no difficulty to an experienced entity functioning upon the astral plane.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### VISIBLE MATERIALIZATIONS.

We must consider now materializations of our second and third types—those which are visible, but not tangible, and in many cases manifestly diaphanous; and the full materializations, which seem in all respects indistinguishable for the time from persons still in the physical body. The second type is not uncommon, and though such materializations usually avoid coming within reach of the sitters I was on one occasion especially asked by a direct voice to pass my hand gently through a form of this nature. I can only say that my sense of touch detected absolutely nothing, though a distinctly visible, but semi-transparent form stood in front of me, smiling at my futile efforts. When I closed my eyes, I simply could not tell whether my hand was inside or outside the body which looked so perfect and so living. Forms of this nature are probably easier to construct than the more solid kind, for I have once or twice had startling evidence that one which appeared entirely solid was in reality so only in part. A hand which is strong enough to give a vigorous grasp is often joined to an arm which simply does not exist as far as the sense of touch is concerned, though appearing to the eye just as solid as the hand. Materializations of this second type are described by Sir William Crookes as follows, at p. 94 of his *Researches*.

#### *Shadowy Forms.*

“In the dusk of the evening during a séance with Mr. Home at my house, the curtains of the window

about eight feet from Mr. Home were seen to move. A dark, shadowy, semi-transparent form like that of a man was then seen by all present standing near the window, waving the curtain with his hand. As we looked the form faded away and the curtain ceased to move. The following is a still more striking instance. As in the former case Mr. Home was the medium. A phantom form came from a corner of the room, took an accordion in his hand, and then glided about the room playing the instrument. The form was visible to all present for many minutes, Mr. Home also being seen at the same time. Coming rather close to a lady who was sitting apart from the rest of the company, she gave a slight cry, upon which it vanished."

When materialization is performed for any reason by a living person thoroughly trained in the resources of the astral plane—one of the pupils of an Adept, for instance—he condenses the surrounding ether into the solid form, and builds in that way so much of a body as may be necessary without in any way interfering with any one else. But at a séance very little of this is usually done, and the much simpler expedient is adopted of withdrawing a large amount of matter from the body of the medium. This matter may under favourable conditions be seen pouring out from his side in great wreaths of mist; in Mr. W. Eglinton's remarkable book, *'Twixt Two Worlds*, there will be found three very interesting illustrations showing successive stages of the development of this mist, from its first faint appearance until the entranced medium is almost entirely hidden by wreaths like those of thick, heavy smoke.

This mist rapidly condenses into a form—sometimes apparently into an exact double of the medium in the first place. I remember at a séance with the well-known

medium, Mr. Cecil Husk, after a period of silent waiting, a brilliant light suddenly blazed out, showing everything in the room quite clearly. The medium was crowded together in his chair—shrunk into himself in a most extraordinary way, apparently in a deep trance, and breathing stertorously; but just in front of him stood an exact duplicate of himself, alert and living, holding out in front of him in the palm of his hand an egg-shaped body, which was the source of the brilliant light. He stood thus for a few moments, and then in an instant the light went out, and the form addressed us in the well-known tones of one of the regular “guides”—showing how entirely he built himself out of the very substance of the medium.

There is no sort of doubt that it is not only etheric matter which is thus temporarily withdrawn from the medium’s body, but also often dense solid and liquid matter, however difficult it may be for us to realize the possibility of such a transference. I have myself seen cases in which this phenomenon undoubtedly took place, and was evidenced by a very considerable loss of weight in the medium’s physical body, and also by a most curious and ghastly appearance of having shrivelled up and shrunk together, so that his tiny wizened face was disappearing into the collar of his coat as he sat. The “guides” directing a séance rarely allow their medium to be seen when he is in this condition, and wisely, for it is indeed a terrible and unwholesome sight, so uncanny, so utterly inhuman that it would inevitably seriously frighten any nervous person.

In that manual of materializations, *People from the Other World* (p. 243), Colonel Olcott describes the manner in which he carefully weighed the materialized form which called itself Honto. At his first attempt

this Red Indian girl weighed eighty-eight pounds, but at the Colonel's request she promptly reduced herself to fifty-eight pounds, and then again increased to sixty-five, all within ten minutes, and without changing her dress. Now, nearly all this mass of physical matter must have been withdrawn from the body of the medium, who must consequently have lost proportionately.

On p. 487 of the same book the Colonel tells us how he tested in the same way the materialized form of Katie Brink, who weighed at first seventy-seven pounds, and then reduced herself to fifty-nine and fifty-two, without affecting her outward appearance in any way. In this case we are confronted with the astonishing phenomenon of the total disappearance of the medium during the materialization, though the Colonel had secured her with sewing cotton, sealed with his own seal, in a peculiar and ingenious way which would absolutely prevent her from leaving her chair in any ordinary way without breaking the cotton. Nevertheless, when he was permitted during the séance to enter the cabinet, that chair was empty; and there was not only nothing to be seen, but also nothing to be felt, when he passed his hands all round the chair. Yet when the séance was over, the medium was found seated as before, half-fainting and utterly exhausted, but with cotton and seal intact! Most wonderful, truly; yet not unique; see *Un Cas de Dématisation*, by M. A. Aksakow.

This matter does not always flow out through the side only; sometimes it appears to ooze out from the whole surface of the body, drawn out by the powerful attraction or suction set up by the guides. Its flowing forth is thus described by Madame E. d'Espérance:

"Then began a strange sensation, which I had sometimes felt at séances. Frequently I have heard it described by others as of cobwebs being passed over the face, but to me, who watched it curiously, it seemed that I could feel fine threads being drawn out of the pores of my skin." *Shadowland*, (p. 229).

*Madame D'Espérance.*

Many mediums have written autobiographies, but I have met with none which impressed me so favourably as this of Madame d'Espérance. It is not only that it has about it a very attractive ring of earnestness and truthfulness, but that the author seems far more closely and intelligently observant than most mediums have been, and more anxious to understand the real nature of the phenomena which occur in her presence.

She takes a rational view of her abnormal faculty, and sets herself to study it with an earnest and loyal desire to arrive at the truth about it all. While heartily admiring the lady's courage and determination, one cannot but regret that it did not fall in her way to study Theosophical literature, which would have told her in the beginning every detail that she has slowly and in many cases painfully discovered, at the cost of much unnecessary suffering and anxiety. Her book begins with the pathetic story of a much-misunderstood childhood, and goes on to describe the years of mental struggle during which the medium slowly freed herself from the trammels of the narrowest orthodoxy. When her mediumship was fully developed it certainly seems to have been of the most wonderful and varied character, and some of the instances given might well appear incredible to any one ignorant of the subject. I have

myself, however, seen phenomena of the same nature as all those which she describes, and consequently I find no difficulty in admitting the possibility of all the strange occurrences which she relates.

She realizes very strongly and describes very forcefully the exceedingly intimate relation which exists between the medium and the body materialized out of his vehicles. We are so entirely accustomed to identify ourselves with our bodies that it is a new and uncanny and almost a horrible sensation to find the body going through experiences of the most vivid and extraordinary description in which nevertheless its true owner has no part whatever. On p. 345 of her book above quoted she gives us a most realistic description of the strangely unnatural situation in which a materializing medium must so often be placed; and I think that no one can read it without understanding how thoroughly undesirable, how utterly unhealthy on all planes and from all points of view such an experience must be.

*Anna or I?*

"Now comes another figure, shorter, slenderer, and with outstretched arms. Somebody rises up at the far end of the circle and comes forward, and the two are clasped in each other's arms. Then inarticulate cries of 'Anna! Oh, Anna! My child! My loved one!'

"Then somebody else gets up and puts her arms round the figure; then sobs, cries, and blessings get mixed up. I feel my body swayed to and fro, and all gets dark before my eyes. I feel somebody's arms round me, although I sit on my chair alone. I feel somebody's heart beating against my breast. I feel that something is happening. No one is near me except



the two children. No one is taking any notice of me. All eyes and thoughts seem concentrated on the white slender figure standing there with the arms of the two black-robed women around it.

"It must be my own heart I feel beating so distinctly. Yet those arms round me? Surely never did I feel a touch so plainly. I begin to wonder which is I. Am I the white figure, or am I the one on the chair? Are they my hands round the old lady's neck, or are these mine that are lying on the knees of me, or on the knees of the figure, if it be not I, on the chair?

"Certainly they are my lips that are being kissed. It is my face that is wet with the tears which these good women are shedding so plentifully. Yet how can it be? It is a horrible feeling, thus losing hold of one's identity. I long to put out one of these hands that are lying so helplessly, and touch some one just to know if I am myself or only a dream—if 'Anna' be I, and I am lost, as it were, in her identity.

"I feel the old lady's trembling arms, the kisses, the tears, the blessings and caresses of the sister, and I wonder in the agony of suspense and bewilderment, how long can it last? How long will there be two of us? Which will it be in the end? Shall I be 'Anna' or 'Anna' be I?

"Then I feel two little hands slip themselves into my nerveless ones and they give me a fresh hold of myself as it were, and with a feeling of exultation I find I am myself, and that little Jonte, tired of being hidden behind the three figures, feels lonely and grasps my hands for company and comfort.

"How glad I am of the touch, even from the hand of a child. My doubts as to who I am are gone. While I am feeling thus the white figure of 'Anna' disappears

in the cabinet, and the two ladies return to their seats, excited and tearful, but overcome with happiness.

"There was a great deal more to happen that night, but somehow I felt weak and indifferent to all around me, and not inclined to be interested in what occurred. Strange and remarkable incidents took place, but for the moment my life seemed dragged out of me and I longed for solitude and rest."

This feeling of lassitude and of having the life dragged out of them is naturally terribly common among mediums. Sir William Crookes remarks on p. 41 of his *Researches*: "After witnessing the painful state of nervous and bodily prostration in which some of these experiments have left Mr. Home—after seeing him lying in an almost fainting condition on the floor, pale and speechless—I could scarcely doubt that the evolution of psychic force is accompanied by a corresponding drain on vital force."

This entirely agrees with my own experience; I have frequently seen a medium absolutely prostrate after a séance, and I fear that many of them fancy themselves compelled to resort to alcoholic stimulants in order to recover from the terrible drain upon their strength. So much of their vitality necessarily goes into the materialized form, and the disturbance to the system is so serious, that after the séance is over, they are in a condition closely resembling the shock which follows a surgical operation. And no wonder; for that would be a serious surgical operation which removed forty pounds of matter from the body, and then restored it again.

On the curious connection between the medium and the materialized form, Madame d'Espérance writes as follows as to the relation between herself and Yolande:

*An Intimate Relation.*

"There seemed to exist a strange link between us. I could do nothing to ensure her appearance amongst us. She came and went, so far as I am aware, entirely independent of my will, but when she had come, she was, I found, dependent on me for her brief material existence. I seemed to lose, not my individuality, but my strength and power of exertion, and though I did not then know it, a great portion of my material substance. I felt that in some way I was changed, but the effort to think logically in some mysterious way affected Yolande, and made her weak." (*Shadowland*, p. 271.)

The medium is conscious of her own individuality in the background all the time; but any attempt to assert it, or to think connectedly, immediately weakens the form, or brings it back to the cabinet. And this is natural, for to think logically means to set up chemical action—to produce oxidization of the phosphorus of the brain; whereas it is only under conditions of perfect passivity in the physical vehicle that so much matter can be spared from it without danger to life. As a matter of fact, there is always a possibility of such danger; and in case of sudden shock or disturbance it may come terribly near a realization. It is for that reason that the attempt of the ignorant and boastful sceptic to seize the "spirit form" is so criminal as well as so brainless an action; and the person whose colossal stupidity leads him to commit such an atrocity runs a very serious risk of occupying the position of defendant in a trial for murder. Beings at that level of intelligence ought not to be permitted to take part in experiments of a delicate nature. What harm may be done by this danger-

ous variety of the genus blockhead is shown by the following extract from the experiences of Madame d'Espérance, given upon p. 298 of her book:

*A Scandalous Outrage.*

"I do not know how long the séance had proceeded, but I knew that Yolande had taken her pitcher on her shoulder and was outside the cabinet. What actually occurred I had to learn afterwards. All I knew was a horrible excruciating sensation of being doubled up and squeezed together, as I can imagine a hollow gutta-percha doll would feel, if it had sensation, when violently embraced by its baby owner. A sense of terror and agonizing pain came over me, as though I were losing hold of life and was falling into some fearful abyss, yet knowing nothing, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, except the echo of a scream which I heard as at a distance. I felt I was sinking down, I knew not where. I tried to save myself, to grasp at something, but missed it; and then came a blank from which I awakened with a shuddering horror and sense of being bruised to death.

"My senses seemed to have been scattered to the winds, and only little by little could I gather them sufficiently together to understand in a slight degree what had happened. Yolande had been seized, and the man who had seized her declared it was I.

"This is what I was told. The statement was so extraordinary that if it had not been for my utter prostration I could have laughed, but I was unable to think or even move. I felt as though very little life remained in me, and that little was a torment. The hæmorrhage of the lungs, which my residence in the south of France had apparently cured, broke out again and the blood

almost suffocated me. A severe prolonged illness was the result; and our departure from England was delayed for some weeks, as I could not be moved."

No wonder that the "guides" take every precaution in their power to save their medium from such brutality. Even they themselves may suffer through the temporary vehicle which they have assumed, trusting themselves to the honour and good-feeling of those who are present on the physical plane. Mr. R. D. Owen, in *The Debatable Land* (p. 273), thus refers to this matter:

"Two highly intelligent friends of mine, now deceased, Dr. A. D. Wilson and Professor James Mapes, both formerly of New York, each on one occasion firmly grasped what seemed a luminous hand. In both cases the result was the same. What was laid hold of melted entirely away—so each told me—in his grasp. I have had communications to the effect that the spirit thus manifesting its presence suffers when this is done, and that a spirit would have great reluctance in appearing, in bodily form, to any one whom it could not trust to refrain from interference with the phenomena, except by its express permission. In my experiments I have always governed myself accordingly, and I ascribe my success in part to this continence."

I do not know whether the "spirit" would suffer in such a case as this, though it certainly does when a materialized form is struck or wounded. For that reason a sword constantly waved round a man who is haunted is supposed to be a protection (and indeed often really is so, as has been seen in some of the narratives previously quoted), and the sword was also an important part of the outfit of the mediæval magician.

No physical weapon could affect the astral body in

the slightest degree; a sword might be passed through it again and again without the owner being even aware of it; but as soon as there is any materialization (and wherever physical phenomena occur there must be some materialization, however little), physical weapons may act through it upon the astral body and produce sensation, much as was the case with the more permanent physical body during life. But undoubtedly the medium may be seriously injured by any unauthorized interference with the materialized form, as is seen by Madame d'Espérance's story.

I most heartily endorse the sentiments expressed above by Mr. Owen, and I have always been governed by them in my own investigations. There are some persons who enter upon an enquiry of this kind with the fixed conviction that they are going to be deceived, and with some idea that they can obviate a result so humbling to their self-conceit, they endeavour to invent all kinds of complicated contrivances, which they think will render fraud impossible. It is quite true that in many cases phenomena do not take place under the conditions which they prescribe, for naturally the dead man is not especially disposed to go out of his way to take a great deal of trouble for a person who meets him from the beginning with unfounded suspicion expressed in terms of egregious self-confidence. Very often also the conditions prescribed by the ignoramus are really such as to render phenomena impossible.

Dr. Alfred R. Wallace once very truly remarked: "Scientific men almost invariably assume that, in this enquiry, they should be permitted at the very outset to impose conditions; and if under such conditions nothing happens, they consider it a proof of imposture or delusion. But they well know that in all other branches

of research, Nature, not they, determines the essential conditions without a compliance with which no experiment will succeed. These conditions have to be learnt by a patient questioning of Nature, and they are different for each branch of science. How much more may they be expected to differ in an enquiry which deals with subtle forces, of the nature of which the physicist is wholly and absolutely ignorant?" In just the same way, a man might easily render electrical experiments impossible, if he chose to regard the insulating arrangements as suspicious, and insisted upon seeing the same results produced when the wires were uninsulated; and then, when it was gently explained to him that insulation was a necessary condition, he might raise the same old parrot-cry of fraud, and declare that these pretended electrical marvels could never be worked under *his* conditions! Instances of the extent to which folly and cruelty can go in this direction are given with full illustrations in Colonel Olcott's *People from the Other World* (pp. 36-40).

I have myself always adopted the plan of giving the dead man credit for honest intention until I saw evidence to the contrary; I have allowed him to arrange his own conditions, and to show exactly what he chose, endeavouring first of all to establish friendly relations; and I have invariably found that as soon as he gained confidence in me, he would very gladly describe the limits of his power, so far as he knew them, and would very frequently himself suggest tests of various kinds to show to others the genuineness of the phenomena.

Attempts have been made to cheat me on several occasions; and when I saw this to be the action of the medium, I simply held my peace, but troubled that medium no further. On the other hand, I have also

seen cases of deceit where I felt convinced that the medium's intentions were perfectly honest, and that the deception lay entirely with the unseen actors in the drama. I have known the medium's physical body, when in a condition of trance, to be wrapped up in materialized gauzy drapery, and passed off as "a spirit form"—apparently for no other reason than to save the operators the trouble of producing a genuine materialization, or possibly because in some way or other the power to produce the real manifestation was lacking. In this case the medium, on hearing what had happened after recovery from his trance, protested most earnestly and with every appearance of real sincerity that he had had no conception of what was being done; and, having many times before seen unmistakably genuine manifestations through him, I believed him.

Exactly the same story was told to me by a very well-known medium with regard to an "exposure" of him which was triumphantly trumpeted abroad in many newspapers a short time ago; and it is at least perfectly possible that the statement may have been equally true in that case also. My experience therefore warrants me in saying that even when a clear case of fraud is discovered, it is not always safe to blame the medium for it. On the other hand, I have known a medium come to give a séance with half a yard of muslin hanging out of her pocket, and I have recognized the aforesaid muslin appearing as spirit drapery at a later stage of the proceedings—in its original form, I mean, for even in cases of genuine materialization of drapery it is frequently formed from the material of the clothes of the medium. Once more we may turn to Madame d'Esperance for an instance showing this to be the case.



*"Spirit" Drapery.*

"It was at one of those séances in Christiania that a sitter 'abstracted' a piece of drapery which clothed one of the spirit-forms. Later I discovered that a large square piece of material was missing from my skirt, partly cut, partly torn out. My dress was of a heavy dark woollen material. The 'abstracted' piece of drapery was found to be of the same shape as that missing from my skirt; but several times larger, and white in colour, the texture fine and thin as gossamer.

"Something of the kind had happened once before in England, when some one had begged the little Ninia for a piece of her abundant clothing. She complied, unwillingly, it seemed, and the reason for her unwillingness was explained when, after the séance, I found a hole in a new dress which I had put on for the first time. This being nearly black, I had attributed the mishap more to an accident on the part of Ninia than to any psychological cause. Now that it happened a second time, I began to understand that it was no accident, and that my dress, or the clothing of the persons in the séance, was the foundation of, or the stores from which the dazzling raiment of the spirit form was drawn." (*Shadowland*, p. 337).

There are various types of this materialized drapery—some quite coarse and some exceedingly fine—finer indeed than even the production of Eastern looms. Sometimes the manifesting entity will encourage a favoured sitter to feel this drapery or even to cut a piece from it. I have had such pieces given to me on several occasions; some of them lasted for years, and appear to be permanent, while others faded away in the course of an hour or so, and one within ten minutes. Though

light and filmy white drapery seems to be the regular fashion among materialized forms, I have also seen them show themselves in the ordinary garb of civilization, and sometimes in a uniform or some special dress characteristic of their position during life.

*Materialization in Full View.*

The following very good account of the materialization and dematerialization of a form is given in *Shadowland* (p. 254), and was written by a member who had frequently formed part of that circle:

"First a filmy, cloudy patch of something white is observed on the floor in front of the cabinet. It then gradually expands, visibly extending itself as if it were an animated patch of muslin, lying fold upon fold, on the floor, until extending about two and a half by three feet and having a depth of a few inches—perhaps six or more. Presently it begins to rise slowly in or near the centre, as if a human head were underneath it, while the cloudy film on the floor begins to look more like muslin falling into folds about the portion so mysteriously rising. By the time it has attained two or more feet, it looks as if a child were under it and moving its arms about in all directions as if manipulating something underneath.

"It continues rising, oftentimes sinking somewhat to rise again higher than before, until it attains a height of about five feet, when its form can be seen as if arranging the folds of drapery about its figure.

"Presently the arms rise considerably above the head and open outwards through a mass of cloud-like spirit drapery, and Yolande stands before us unveiled, graceful and beautiful, nearly five feet in height, having a turban-like head-dress, from beneath which her long

black hair hangs over her shoulders and down her back.

"Her body-dress, of Eastern form, displays every limb and contour of the body, while the superfluous white veil-like drapery is wrapped round her for convenience, or thrown down on the carpet out of the way till required again.

"All this occupies from ten to fifteen minutes to accomplish.

"When she disappears or dematerializes it is as follows. Stepping forward to show herself and be identified by any strangers then present, she slowly and deliberately opens out the veil-like superfluous drapery; expanding it, she places it over her head, and spreads it round her like a great bridal veil, and then immediately but slowly sinks down, becoming less bulky as she collapses, dematerializing her body beneath the cloud-like drapery until it has little or no resemblance to Yolande. Then she further collapses until she has no resemblance to human form, and more rapidly sinks down to fifteen or twelve inches. Then suddenly the form falls into a heaped patch of drapery—literally Yolande's left-off clothing, which slowly but visibly melts into nothingness.

"The dematerializing of Yolande's body occupies from two to five minutes, while the disappearance of the drapery occupies from half a minute to two minutes. On one occasion, however, she did not dematerialize this drapery or veil, but left the whole lying on the carpet in a heap, until another spirit came out of the cabinet to look at it for a moment, as if moralizing on poor Yolande's disappearance. This taller spirit also disappeared and was replaced by the little, brisk, vivacious child-form of Ninia, the Spanish girl, who like-

wise came to look at Yolande's remains; and, curiously picking up the left-off garments, proceeded to wrap them round her own little body, which was already well clothed with drapery."

I have myself seen both these processes, almost exactly as described above. In my case the form was that of an unusually tall man, and he did not begin by forming drapery, but appeared as a patch of cloudy light on the floor, which rose and increased until it looked somewhat like the stump of a tree. It grew on until it was a vague pillar of cloud towering above our heads, and then gradually condensed into a definite and well-known form, which stepped forward, shook me warmly by the hand, and spoke in a full clear voice, exactly as any other friend might have done. After talking to us for about five minutes and answering several questions, he again shook hands with us and announced that he must go. Bidding us good-bye, he immediately became indistinct in outline, and relapsed into the pillar of cloud, which sank down fairly rapidly into the small cloudy mass of light upon the floor, which then flickered and vanished.

I have seen three materialized forms together—one of them an Arab six inches taller than the medium, another a European of ordinary medium height, and the third a little girl of dark complexion, claiming to be a red Indian—while the medium was securely locked up inside a wire cage of his own invention, which was secured by two keys (both in my pocket) and a letter-lock which could only be operated from the outside. Later in the same evening we were requested to unlock this cage, and the two forms first described brought out the entranced medium between them, one supporting him by each arm. We were allowed to touch both

the medium and the materialized forms, and were much struck to find the latter distinctly firmer and more definite than the former. They did not in this case return him to his cage, but laid him upon a sofa in full view of us all, cautioned us that he would be exceedingly exhausted when he woke, and then incontinently vanished into thin air before our eyes. All this took place in a dim light, the two gas-jets in the room being both turned very low, but there was all the time quite sufficient illumination to enable us to recognize clearly the features both of the medium and of our dead visitors, and to follow their movements with absolute certainty.

It is only when the conditions are favourable that one may hope to find the materialized forms able to move about the room as freely as in the cases above described. More generally the materialized form is strictly confined to the immediate neighbourhood of the medium, and is subject to an attraction which is constantly drawing it back to the body from which it came, so that if kept away from the medium too long the figure collapses, and the matter which composed it, returning to the etheric condition, rushes back instantly to its source. It is excessively dangerous to the medium's health, or even to his life, to prevent this return in any way; and it was no doubt precisely this that caused such terrible suffering in the case of poor Madame d'Espérance, above quoted. It would seem from her own account as though the majority of her etheric matter, and probably a very great deal of the denser also, was with Yolande rather than in the cabinet; and since the form of Yolande was so unwarrantably detained it is probable that what was left in her body would rush into Yolande's, and so it would in one sense be true that she was found outside the cabinet

and in the hands of the ignorant vulgarian who had seized the materialized form. All this makes it increasingly obvious that no one who has not sufficient education to comprehend a little of the conditions ought ever to be permitted to take part in a séance.

Another reason for great care in the selection of sitters is that in the case of materialization matter is borrowed to some extent from all of them as well as from the medium. There is no doubt, therefore, a considerable intermixture of such matter, and undesirable qualities or vices of any kind in any one of the sitters are distinctly liable to react upon the others, and most of all upon the medium, who is most heavily drawn upon, and is almost certain to be the most sensitive person present. Yet again we may obtain an example of this from Madame d'Espérance's invaluable book. On p. 307 she writes:

*Evil Effect of Tobacco.*

"From the very beginning of our experiments in this line I had always more or less suffered from nausea and vomiting after a séance for materialization, and I had grown to accept this as a natural consequence and not to be avoided. This had always been the case, except when surrounded only by the members of our home circle or children. During the course of séances for photography this unpleasantness increased so much that I was usually prostrate for a day, or sometimes two, after a sitting, and, as the symptoms were those of nicotine poisoning, experiments were made and it was discovered that none of these uncomfortable sensations were felt when séances were held with non-smokers. Again, when sick persons were in the circle, I invariably found myself feeling more or less unwell

afterwards. With persons accustomed to the use of alcohol the discomfort was almost as marked as with smokers.

"These séances were to me fruitful in many respects; I learned that many habits, which are common to the generality of mankind and sanctioned by custom, are deleterious to the results of a séance, or, at any rate, to the health of a medium."

A "guide" who has been working for some years and has learnt to know fairly well the possibilities of the plane, has often very interesting phenomena connected with materialization which he is willing to exhibit to special friends when the power is strong. One such exhibition was sometimes given by him who calls himself "John King" many years ago, and may perhaps be given by him still. He would sometimes take one of the painted luminous slates and lay his hand upon it. A fine, strong, muscular, well-shaped hand it was, and its outline of course stood forth perfectly distinctly against the faintly luminous background. Then as we watched it, he would cause that hand to diminish visibly until it was a miniature about the size of a very small baby's hand, though still perfect in its resemblance to his own. Then slowly and steadily under our eyes it would grow again until it covered the whole slate, and would finally return by degrees to its normal size. Now of course this manifestation might easily have been a mere case of mesmeric influence if only one person had seen it; but since every one in the circle saw precisely the same, and there was nothing to indicate that any attempt at mesmerism was being made, it seemed on the whole more probable that it was really an exhibition of augmentation and diminution in the materialized hand—a result which could very readily be brought about

by any one who understood how to manipulate the matter.

*A Dead Man's Joke.*

Occasionally the materialization takes some other shape than the human. One such case which I recollect very vividly shows that our departed friends by no means lose their sense of humour when they pass over into astral life. At a certain séance we were much annoyed by the presence of a man of the boastful sceptic genus. He swaggered in the usual blatant way, and showed his entire ignorance by every word he uttered in the loud, coarse voice which constantly reiterated that he knew that all these things were nonsense, and that we might be sure that nothing would happen so long as *he* was there.

This went on for some time as we sat round the table, and at last the medium, who was a mild, inoffensive sort of man, quietly advised him to moderate his tone, as on several occasions the "spirits" had been known to treat rather roughly persons who talked in that manner. The sceptic, however, only became coarser and more offensive in his remarks, defying any spirit that ever existed to frighten him, or even to dare to show itself in his presence. We had now been sitting for a good while in the darkness, and nothing whatever had happened beyond a few brief words from one of the "guides" at the commencement of the séance, which had informed us that they were storing up power. As the time passed on we all got somewhat wearied, and I at least began to think that perhaps our sceptic really was so very inharmonious an influence that it would be impossible to get any good results—wherein, however, it seems that I was wrong.



To make clear what did happen I must say a few words as to the room in which the séance was being held. It was a tiny apartment at the back of the house on the second floor, opening out of a much larger front room by great folding-doors which reached up to the ceiling. We were seated round a large circular table, so much out of proportion to the room that the backs of our chairs were all but touching the walls and the big door as we sat round it. There was another door in the corner of the room leading to a flight of stairs; that was locked, the key being in the lock on the inside, and the great doors were also secured by a bolt on our side. We sat, as I say, with practically no manifestations for about three-quarters of an hour, and I at least was heartily tired of the whole thing.

Suddenly in the adjoining room we heard extraordinarily ponderous footsteps, as of some mighty giant; and even as we raised our heads to listen the great doors burst violently open, crashing into the backs of the chairs on that side, driving them and their occupants against the table, and so pushing the table itself against those on the opposite side. A pale, rather ghastly luminosity shone in through the opened door, and by its light we saw—we all saw—an enormous elephant stepping straight in upon us, dashing the chairs together with his stride! A gigantic elephant in a room of that size is not exactly a pleasant neighbour; nobody stopped to think of the impossibility of the thing—nobody waited to see what would happen next; the great beast was on the top of us, as it were, and the man nearest to the back door tore it open, and before we had time for a second thought we were all rushing madly down those stairs.

A roar of Homeric laughter followed us, and in a

moment we realized the absurdity of the situation, and some of us ran back, and struck a light. No one was there, and both the rooms were empty; there was no way out of either of them but the doors which opened side by side upon the head of the stair, which had been within our sight all the time; there was nowhere for anybody to have escaped to, if any one could have been playing a trick upon us; not a trace of an elephant, and nothing to show for our fright, except the bolt torn off the folding-door with the force of the bursting open, and three broken chairs to testify to the speed of our departure! We gathered again in our room, and gave way (now it was over) to unrestrained mirth—all but our sceptic, who had rushed straight out of the house; and he was so terrified that he would not even return into the hall below for his coat and hat, and they had to be carried out into the street for him. I have never seen him since, but I have sometimes wondered exactly *how* he explained to himself afterwards the deception which he must have supposed to be practised upon him.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS SPIRITUALISM.

"But," some spiritualists have said to me, "we always thought that you Theosophists supposed all our phenomena to be the work of elementals, or fairies, or devils or something of that sort!" No Theosophist who knows anything about it has ever made any such foolish assertion. What may have been said is that some part of the phenomena were occasionally produced by agencies other than dead men or women; and that is perfectly true. It has often seemed to me that there has frequently been a good deal of entirely unnecessary mistrust and misconception between Theosophists and spiritualists. Various spiritualistic organs have frequently abused Theosophy in no measured terms, and there is no doubt that on our side also both speakers and writers have often referred to spiritualism with much scorn, but with little knowledge. But I hope that with more knowledge each of the other we shall come to respect one another more as we understand one another better, for we each have our part to fill in the great work of the future. It would indeed be foolish of us to quarrel, for we have more in common with each other than either of us has with any of the other shades of opinion.

#### *Points of Agreement.*

We both hold strenuously to the great central idea of man as an immortal and ever-progressive being; we both know that as is his life now, so shall it be after he has cast aside this body, which is his only that he may

learn through it; we both hold the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man as fundamental tenets; and we both know that the gains and rewards of this world are but as dross compared with the glorious certainties of the higher life beyond the grave. Let us stand side by side on this common platform, and let us postpone the consideration of our points of difference until we have converted the rest of the world to the belief in these points upon which we agree. Surely that is wise policy, for these are the points of importance; and if the life is lived in accordance with these all the rest will follow.

We have a magnificent system of philosophy; our spiritualistic brother does not care for it. Well, if his thought does not run along that line, why should we seek to force it upon him? Perhaps presently he will feel the need of some such system; if he does, then there it is all ready for his study. I believe that in due course I shall return to live again upon this earth; herein some of my spiritualistic brothers agree with me, and some do not; but, after all, what does that matter? To us this doctrine of reincarnation is a very luminous and helpful one, because it seems to explain so much for which otherwise there is no solution; but if another man does not yet feel the need of it, it is no part of our policy to try to force it upon him.

We hold the idea of continued progress after death by means of other lives upon this earth, after the life on other planes is over; the spiritualist prefers the idea of passing on to other and higher spheres altogether. We both agree that there is a progress hereafter; let us live so as to make the best use of this existence as a preparation for that one, for if we do that we shall surely come out successfully, whichever of us is right as to the place

of our future meeting. When all the world is living its highest in the preparation for that life of progress, it will be time enough to begin to argue about where it will be lived.

*Untrained Observation of Little Value.*

As to the spiritualistic phenomena, we have no quarrel whatever with them; we know very well that they take place, and we know that they have had great value as demonstrating the reality of super-physical life to many a sceptical mind. There are many men who seem constitutionally incapable of profiting by the experience of others; they must go and see everything for themselves, not realizing that, even if they do see, their untrained observations will be of very little value. On this point Mr. Fullerton has very well said:

"To ensure observations with any worth there must be long and careful discipline; natural errors must through repeated experience be guarded against, distinctions and qualifications and illusions be learned. This is true of the physical plane; much more of the astral plane, where phenomena are so different, conditions so unlike, misguidance so multiform. He who assumes that his untutored observation for the first time of the contents and facts of the astral world would better determine them than does the trained faculty of long and accomplished students, presupposes really that he is an exception to universal rule, superior to other men and of different mould. But what is this save a form of vanity, a case of that strange delusion as to personal worth which the smallest observation of human nature might have cured? It is akin to the supposition that his first introduction to an unknown continent, he not being a naturalist, a physicist, or a botanist, would

be more conclusive in its results than the protracted researches of scientists long familiar with the region and mutually comparing their investigations." (*The Proofs of Theosophy*, p. 7.)

If a man must see for himself, and is unable to rest upon the basis of intellectual conviction, by all means let him attend the spiritualistic séance, and learn by experience, as so many others have done. It is not a course that we should advise except to such a man as this, because there are certain serious drawbacks to it from our point of view.

### *Drawbacks.*

The greatest of these is one at which the sceptic would laugh—the danger of believing too much! For if the sceptic has determination and perseverance, he will assuredly be convinced sooner or later; and when he is, it is quite likely that the pendulum will swing to the other extreme, and that he will believe too much, instead of too little. He may readily grow to regard all the words of the dead as gospel, all communications which come through the tilts of a table as divinely inspired.

There is also another danger—that of being uncomfortably haunted. Often there come to a séance most undesirable dead people, men of depraved morals, seeking to gratify vicariously obscene lower passions. The "guide" usually protects his medium from such influences, and will not allow such a man to communicate; but he cannot prevent him from attaching himself to other sitters and following them home. The sceptic may think himself strong-minded and non-sensitive, and therefore proof against any such possibility; some day he may be unpleasantly undeceived; but even if

that be so, does he wish to run the risk of bringing home an influence to his wife or his daughter? Of course, I fully recognize that this is only a possibility—that a man might attend a score of séances and encounter nothing of this sort; yet these things have happened, and they are happening even now. People driven to the verge of insanity by astral persecution have come to me again and again; and in many cases it was at a séance that they first encountered that ghostly companion. The strong can resist; but who knows whether he is strong until he tries?

*Resolution Needed.*

When, however, this unfortunate thing has already happened to a person—when he already feels himself haunted or obsessed—there is only one thing to be done, and that is to set the mind steadily against it in determined resistance. Realize strongly that the human will is stronger than any evil influence, and that you have a right to your own individuality and the use of your own organs—a right to choose your company astrally as well as on the physical plane. Assert this right persistently, and all will be well with you. Take resolutely to heart the common-sense advice given by Miss Freer, in her *Essays in Psychical Research*:

“If you believe yourself obsessed, if planchette swears, and your table-raps give lying messages, and you fall into trances at unreasonable moments, *drop the subject*. Get a bicycle, or learn Hebrew, or go on a walking tour, or weed the garden. If you are sane, you can do as you like with your own mind; if you can *not*, consult the staff of Colney Hatch! Want of self-restraint is either sin or disease.”

*Possibility of Deception.*

Then there is always the possibility of deception—not so much of deception by the medium, or by any one on the physical plane, as by entities behind. I have known many cases in which such deceptions were well-intentioned; but of course they remain deceptions nevertheless. It may happen that one dead man will personate another from the best of motives—perhaps simply to comfort surviving relations, by taking the place of one who does not care sufficiently, or perhaps is ashamed to come. Sometimes one man will take the place of another who has already passed on to the heaven-world and so is out of reach, in order that his surviving relations may not feel themselves neglected or abandoned. In such a case it is not for us to blame him; his action may be right or it may be wrong, but that is a matter exclusively for his own conscience, and we are not called upon to judge him. I simply note the fact that such cases occur.

It must be remembered that the man who has passed on into the heaven-world has left behind him his astral corpse, which is at the stage of decay of the shade or of the shell, according to the time which has elapsed since he abandoned it. (See *The Astral Plane*, pp. 49-53.) Obviously to utilize and revivify this will be the easier way of personating him, and it is therefore the plan usually adopted.

It is not even in the least necessary that the communicating entity should be human at all; many a joyous and obliging nature spirit is proud to have the opportunity of playing the part of a being belonging to a superior evolution, and will continue assuring his de-



lighted audience that he is "so happy" as long as they like to listen to him.

The entity who poses at a séance as Shakespeare or Julius Cæsar, as Mary Queen of Scots or George Washington, is usually of this class, though he is sometimes also a human being of low degree, to whom it is a joy to strut even for a few minutes in such borrowed plumes, to enjoy even for a single evening the respect due to a well-known name. Also, if he has something to say which he considers useful or important, he thinks (and quite rightly) that credulous mortals are more likely to pay attention to it if it be attributed to some distinguished person. His motives are often estimable, even though we cannot approve of his methods.

There is simply any amount of such personation as this; it is one of the commonest facts which we encounter in our researches. There is a book on Spiritualism, for example, by Judge Edmonds of the Supreme Court of New York, which consists chiefly of communications purporting to come from Swedenborg and Bacon, with occasional observations from Washington and Charlemagne; but none of these great people seem to have risen at all to the level of their earthly reputation, and their remarks do not differ appreciably from the deadly dulness of the ordinary trance-address, while many of their statements are of course wildly inaccurate.

Another fine example is the list of signatures appended to the prolegomena of *The Spirits' Book*, by Allan Kardec, which is as follows: "John the Evangelist, St. Augustine, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louis, the Spirit of Truth, Socrates, Plato, Fénelon, Franklin, Swedenborg, etc., etc." One wonders who is covered by the mystic "etc. etc.," and whether the other names were all

that the communicating entity could think of at the moment!

All such extravagant pretensions as these are so obviously ridiculous that they are easy of detection. But when the man personated is one of very ordinary type, it is quite another matter; so that at a séance, unless the sitter is himself a trained clairvoyant of no mean order, he simply cannot tell what it is that he sees, however much he may flatter himself that his discernment is perfect. Let me quote once more what I wrote some years ago in *The Astral Plane*, p. 108.

"A manifesting 'spirit' is often exactly what it professes to be, but often also is nothing of the kind; and for the ordinary sitter there is absolutely no means of distinguishing the true from the false, since the extent to which a being having all the resources of the astral plane at his command can delude a person on the physical plane is so great that no reliance can be placed even on what seems the most convincing proof.

"If something manifests which announces itself as a man's long-lost brother, he can have no certainty that its claim is a just one. If it tells him of some fact known only to that brother and to himself, he remains unconvinced, for he knows that it might easily have read the information from his own mind, or from his surroundings in the astral light. Even if it goes still further and tells him something connected with his brother, of which he himself is unaware, but which he afterwards verifies, he still realizes that even this may have been read from the astral records, or that what he sees before him may be only the shade of his brother, and so possesses his memory without in any way being himself. It is not for one moment denied that important communications have sometimes been made at séances by entities who in such

cases have been precisely what they said they were; all that is claimed is that it is quite impossible for the ordinary person who visits a séance ever to be certain that he is not being cruelly deceived in one or other of half a dozen different ways."

Once more, I know very well that these are possibilities only, and that in the majority of cases the dead man gives his name honestly enough; but the possibilities exist nevertheless, and often materialize themselves into actualities.

### *Harm to the Medium.*

Another point is the harm which must to a greater or less extent be done to the medium—not only the extreme physical prostration which I have mentioned, leading sometimes to nervous break-down, and sometimes to excessive use of stimulants in order to avoid that break-down—but also along moral lines. Here I must protest very emphatically against the ordinary type of paid séances to which anyone may come on payment of so much per head. It places the unfortunate medium in an utterly false position, and exposes him to a temptation to which no man ought ever intentionally to be exposed. Anyone who knows anything at all about these phenomena knows that they are erratic, that they are dependent upon many causes of which as yet he knows only a few, and that therefore sometimes they can be had and sometimes they cannot. This is the experience of every investigator. Miss Goodrich Freer corroborates it in the preface to her *Essays in Psychical Research*, p. vi. :—

"If I know anything, I know that psychic phenomena are not to be commanded, be their origin what it may.  
. . . . He who ordains the services of angels as well as of men, may send His messengers—but not, I think,

to produce poltergeist phenomena. The veil of the future may be lifted now and then—but not, I take it, at the bidding of a guinea fee in Bond Street. That we may momentarily transcend time and space, the temporary conditions of our mortality, I cannot doubt; but such phenomena are not to be commanded, nor of every-day occurrence, nor hastily to be assumed.”

Now if the medium is in the position of having been paid beforehand for their production, and then he finds that they will not come, what is he to do to satisfy all these people who are sitting round him expecting their money's worth? It is so easy to deceive them; they lend themselves to it so readily; nay, it is often quite sufficient just to allow them to deceive themselves. It is not fair to put any man in such a position as that; and if the medium sometimes falls into cheating, it is surely not he alone who is to blame.

#### *Harm to the Dead.*

Then there is the whole question of possible harm to the dead. I have already admitted that the dead man sometimes wishes to communicate in order to unburden his mind in some way, and when this is the case it is well that he should have the opportunity of doing it. But these cases are comparatively rare. If the dead want us they will seek to reach us; but we should invariably let the movement come from their side—we should never seek to draw them back. It may be said, perhaps, “but is it not a natural desire on the part of a mother to see her dead child again?” Surely it would be more natural for the mother to be entirely unselfish, and to think first of what was best for the child, before she considered her personal longings. In many cases communication with the physical plane may do a man but little harm during the

earliest stages of his astral life; but it must always be remembered that in every case it intensifies and prolongs his attachment to the lower levels of the plane—that it sets up in him a habit of remaining closely in touch with the earth-life.

*The Place and Work of Spiritualism.*

Yet with all this spiritualism has assuredly its place and its work, and it has been of incalculable value to many thousands of men and women. The Catholic Church and the Salvation Army are both sections of Christianity, yet they appeal to widely different types of people, and those who are attracted by one would have been very unlikely to come to the other. So each has its place and its work to do for the broad idea of Christianity. In the same way it seems to me that Theosophy and spiritualism have each their clientèle. Those who study the philosophy which we set before them would never have been satisfied with the trance-speaking and the constantly repeated phenomena of the spiritualistic séance; those who desire such phenomena, and those who yearn after what good old Dr. Dee used to call “sermon-stuffe” would never have been happy with us, while they find exactly what they want in spiritualism.

For among spiritualists, as among any other body of men, there are several types. There are those who are chiefly interested in the trance-speaking, who make this their religion and take their trance-address followed by a clairvoyant reading of surroundings every Sunday evening, just as mortals who are otherwise disposed go to church or to a Theosophical lecture. Then there is the type whose interest is purely personal—whose one and only idea in connection with the whole affair is the gratification of their private and particular wish to see their

own dead relations. There is another type who honestly and unselfishly set themselves to the task of trying to help and develop the degraded, the unevolved and the ignorant among the dead; and there is no doubt that they really achieve a great deal of good with that unpromising class of people. Others there are who are really anxious to learn and understand scientifically the facts of the higher life; and these people, while intensely delighted and interested for a time, usually find presently that beyond a certain point they can get no further; and then perhaps we can do something for them in Theosophy.

A question which is constantly asked is "Why do not these dead men who return to us with the knowledge of a higher plane teach us the doctrine of reincarnation?" The answer is perfectly simple; first of all, some of them do teach it. All spiritists of the French school of Allan Kardec hold this doctrine during life, and consequently when they return after death they have still the same story to tell. Those who return in England or America usually say nothing about it, because they have no means of knowing anything more about it now than they knew when they were upon earth. As we explained in an earlier chapter, it is the soul himself in his causal body who passes from life to life, and he has no more knowledge or memory of that wider existence on the astral plane than he had on the physical. So he repeats only what he has known on earth, unless he is so fortunate as to meet with someone who is able to teach him something of this grand truth—an Oriental for example, or a Theosophist.

Still, even in spiritualism evidence of reincarnation occasionally appears; and naturally it is usually of that rapid type of reincarnation of which Monsieur Gabriel Delanne collected so many examples in the address

which he delivered some years ago before one of the spiritualistic societies. Here, for example, is a curious case, extracted from the pages of *The Progressive Thinker* of December 13th, 1902:—

It appears in the form of a letter to the editor, signed with the initials S. O., and dated somewhat vaguely from New Mexico.

*A Story of Reincarnation.*

“I offer my personal experience as an absolute fact—not as supporting any theory. At the time I passed through the experience (28 years ago), I knew absolutely nothing of mediumship in any phase and probably had never heard the word reincarnation. I was then sixteen years of age and had been married one year.

“The knowledge that I was to become a mother had just dawned upon me, when in a vague way I became conscious of the almost constant presence of an invisible personality. I seemed to know intuitively that my invisible companion was a woman, and quite a number of years older than myself. By degrees this presence grew stronger. In the third month after she first made her presence felt, I could receive impressionally long messages from her. She manifested the most solicitous care for my health and general welfare, and as time wore on her voice became audible to me, and I enjoyed many hours of conversation with her. She gave her name and nationality, with many details of her personal history. She seemed anxious that I should know and love her for herself, as she expressed it. She made continual efforts to become visible to me, and towards the last succeeded. She was then as true a companion to me as if she had been clothed in an embodiment of flesh. I had merely

to draw my curtains, shrouding the room in quiet tones, to have the presence manifest, both to sight and hearing.

Two or three weeks before the birth of my baby she informed me that the real purport of her presence was her intention to enter the new form at its birth, in order to complete an earth-experience that had come to an untimely end. I confess I had but a dim conception of her meaning, and was considerably troubled over the matter.

"On the night before my daughter's birth, I saw my companion for the last time. She came to me and said, 'Our time is at hand; be brave and all will be well with us.'

"My daughter came, and in appearance was a perfect miniature of my spirit friend, and totally unlike either family to which she belonged, and the first remark of everyone on seeing her would be, 'Why, she does not look like a baby at all. She looks at least twenty years old.'

"I was greatly surprised some years later when I chanced to find in an old work the history of the woman, whose name and history my spirit friend claimed as her own in her earth-life, and the fragments of her story, as she had given them to me, were in accord with history, except some personal details not likely to have been known to anyone else. All this experience I kept to myself as a profound secret, for, young as I was, I realized what judgment the world would place upon the narrator of such a story.

"Once when my daughter was in her fifteenth year, the first name of my spirit friend happened to be mentioned in her presence. She turned to me quickly with a look of surprise on her face and said, 'Mamma, didn't my papa call me by this name?' (Her father died when she was one year old.) I said, 'No, dear, you were never



called this name.' She replied, 'Well, I surely remember it, and somebody somewhere called me by it.'

"In conclusion I will add that in character my daughter is very much like the historic character of the woman whose spirit said she would inhabit the new form.

"These are my facts. I offer no explanation; if they chance to fit anybody's theory, so much the better for the theory. Theories usually need some facts to prop them up; facts are independent and able to stand on their own feet."

Madame d'Espérance, who seems to be in so many respects in advance of the majority of mediums, appears to have been taught not only reincarnation but much other Theosophical doctrine by one of her dead friends, as is set forth in her book *Shadowland*. Perhaps the most striking incident in that very interesting work is the occasion on which the author leaves her body and is shown a remarkable symbolical vision of her life; for in that one experience her eyes are opened to the doctrine of cause and effect, of evolution and reincarnation, and to the absolute realization of the fundamental unity of all, however dimly and imperfectly it may be expressed. For cause and effect is involved in the statement made by the spirit friend as to the path of life: "It is the road you have made; you have no other." Evolution is taught when she is shown "that it is the same life which, circling for ever and ever through form after form, dwelling in the rocks, the sand, the sea, in each blade of grass, each tree, each flower, in all forms of animal existence, culminates in man's intelligence and perception."

As to reincarnation she remarks: "I could see that the fact of the spirit first taking on itself the form of man did not bring it to its utmost earthly perfection, for there are many degrees of man. In the savage it widens its

experience and finds a new field for education, which being exhausted, another step is taken; and so step by step, in an ever onward, progressive, expansive direction the spirit developes, the decay of the forms which the spirit employs being only the evidence that they have fulfilled their mission, and served the purpose for which they were used. They return to their original elements, to be used again and again as a means whereby the spirit can manifest itself, and obtain the development it requires." (p. 376).

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE HEAVEN-WORLD.

All religions agree in declaring the existence of heaven, and in stating that the enjoyment of its bliss follows upon a well-spent earthly life. Christianity and Muhammadanism speak of it as a reward assigned by God to those who have pleased Him, but most other faiths describe it rather as the necessary result of the good life, exactly as we should from the Theosophical point of view. Yet though all religions agree in painting this happy life in glowing terms, none of them have succeeded in producing an impression of reality in their descriptions. All that is written about heaven is so absolutely unlike anything that we have known, that many of the descriptions seem almost grotesque to us. We should hesitate to admit this with regard to the legends familiar to us from our infancy, but if the stories of one of the other great religions were read to us, we should see it readily enough. In Buddhist or Hindu books we shall find magniloquent accounts of interminable gardens, in which the trees are all of gold and silver, and their fruits of various kinds of jewels, and we might be tempted to smile, unless the thought occurred to us that, after all, to the Buddhist or Hindu our tale of streets of gold and gates of pearl might in truth seem quite as improbable.

The fact is that the ridiculous element is imported into these accounts only when we take them literally, and fail to realize that each scribe is trying the same task

from his point of view, and that all alike are failing because the great truth behind it all is utterly indescribable. The Hindu writer had no doubt seen some of the gorgeous gardens of the Indian kings, where just such decorations as he describes are commonly employed. The Jewish scribe had no familiarity with such things, but he dwelt in a great and magnificent city—probably Alexandria; and so *his* concept of splendour was a city, but made unlike anything on earth by the costliness of its material and its decorations. So each is trying to paint a truth which is too grand for words by employing such similes as are familiar to his mind.

There have been those since that day who have seen the glory of heaven, and have tried in their feeble way to describe it. Some of our own students have been among these, and in the Theosophical Manual No. 6 the result of some of their investigations may be found. We do not speak now of gold and silver, of rubies and diamonds, when we wish to convey the idea of the greatest possible refinement and beauty of colour and form; we draw our similes rather from the colours of the sunset, and from all the glories of sea and sky, because to us these are the more heavenly. Yet those of us who have seen the truth know well that in all our attempts at description we have failed as utterly as the Oriental scribes to convey any idea of a reality which no words can ever picture, though every man one day shall see it and know it for himself.

### *A Glorious Reality.*

For this heaven is not a dream; it is a radiant reality; but to comprehend anything of it we must first change one of our initial ideas on the subject. Heaven is not a place, but a state of consciousness. If you ask me,

"Where is heaven?" I must answer you that it is *here*—round you at this very moment, near to you as the air you breathe. The light is all about you, as the Buddha said so long ago; you have only to cast the bandage from your eyes and look. But what is this casting away of a bandage? Of what is it symbolical? It is simply a question of raising the consciousness to a higher level, of learning to focus it in the vehicle of finer matter. I have already written of the possibility of doing this with regard to the astral body, and thereby seeing the astral world; this needs simply a further stage of the same process, the raising of the consciousness to the mental plane, for man has a body for that level also, through which he may receive its vibrations, and so live in the glowing splendour of heaven while still possessing a physical body—though indeed after such an experience he will have little relish for the return to the latter.

The ordinary man reaches this state of bliss only after death, and not immediately after it except in very rare cases. I have already explained how after death the ego is steadily withdrawing into himself. The whole astral life is in fact a constant process of withdrawal, and when in course of time the soul reaches the limit of that plane, he dies to it in just the same way as he did to the physical plane. That is to say, he casts off the body of that plane, and leaves it behind him while he passes on to higher and still fuller life. No pain or suffering of any kind precedes this second death, and indeed it would be quite impossible that the ordinary man should in any way realize its nature. He would simply feel himself sinking gently into a delightful repose, and out of that he would awaken into this condition of higher consciousness. The Theosophical student might very possibly recognize that he had reached the end of his astral life;

but he would hail its arrival with delight because of his knowledge of the grander world which lies before him. Just as in the case of physical death, there is usually a period of unconsciousness, from which the man awakes gradually. Some years ago I wrote a book called *The Devachanic Plane*, in which I endeavoured to some extent to describe what he would see, and to tabulate as far as I could the various subdivisions of this glorious Land of Light, giving instances which had been observed in the course of our investigations in connection with this heaven-life. Here I shall try to put the matter from quite another point of view, and those readers who wish may supplement the information by reading that book as well.

### *The Realm of Thought.*

Perhaps the most comprehensive opening statement is that this is the plane of the Divine Mind, that here we are in the very realm of thought itself, and that everything of good that man possibly *could* think is here in vivid, living reality. We labour under a great disadvantage from our habit of regarding material things as real, and those which are not material as dream-like and therefore unreal; whereas the fact is that everything which is material is buried and hidden in its matter, and so whatever of reality it may possess is far less obvious and recognizable than it would be when regarded from a higher standpoint. When we hear of a world of thought, we immediately think of an unreal world, built out of "such stuff as dreams are made of," as the poet says. Let us try to realize that when a man leaves his physical body and opens his consciousness to astral life, his first sensation is of the intense vividness and reality of that life, so that he thinks, "Now for the first time I know

what it is to live; till now I have been a prisoner without knowing it. While I thought myself so busy and so wise, I have been in reality but the crawling caterpillar, knowing nothing beyond my little leaf; now I have spread my wings like the butterfly, and passed out into the sunlight of the wider life." But when in turn he leaves that life for the higher one, he exactly repeats the same experience, for this life is in turn so much fuller and wider and more intense than the astral that once more no comparison is possible. And yet there is another life yet, beyond all this, unto which even this is but as moonlight unto sunlight; but it is useless at present to think of that.

There may be many to whom it sounds absurd that a realm of thought should be more real than the physical world; well, it must remain so for them until they have some experience of a life higher than this, and then in one moment they will know far more than any words can ever tell them. Sometimes a very slight experience is sufficient. We may remember Sir Humphry Davy's eloquent description of the effect produced on him by the inhalation of nitrous oxide. He states that he began to lose the perception of external things; trains of vivid visible images rapidly passed through his mind, and were connected with words in such a manner as to produce perceptions perfectly novel. "I existed," he said, "in a world of newly connected and newly modified ideas." When he recovered he exclaimed; "Nothing exists but thoughts; the universe is composed of impressions, ideas, pleasures and pains!" Yet this was merely the result of an imperfect recollection of a slight experience upon the astral plane, while here we are dealing with something almost inconceivably higher.

*The Divine Mind.*

On this plane, then, we find existing the infinite fullness of the Divine Mind, open in all its limitless affluence to every soul, just in proportion as that soul has qualified himself to receive. If man had already completed his destined evolution, if he had fully realized and unfolded the divinity whose germ is within him, the whole of this glory would be within his reach; but since none of us has yet done that, since we are only gradually rising towards that splendid consummation, it comes that none as yet can grasp that entirety, but each draws from it and cognizes only so much as he has by previous effort prepared himself to take. Different individuals bring very different capacities; as the Eastern simile has it, each man brings his own cup, and some of the cups are large and some are small, but, small or large, every cup is filled to its utmost capacity; the sea of bliss holds far more than enough for all.

All religions have spoken of this bliss of heaven, yet few of them have put before us with sufficient clearness and precision this leading idea which alone explains rationally how for all alike such bliss is possible—which is, indeed, the keynote of the conception—the fact that each man makes his own heaven by selection from the ineffable splendours of the Thought of God Himself. A man decides for himself both the length and the character of his heaven-life by the causes which he himself generates during his earth-life; therefore he cannot but have exactly the amount which he has deserved, and exactly the quality of joy which is best suited to his idiosyncrasies; for this is a world in which every being must, from the very fact of his consciousness there, be enjoying the highest spiritual bliss of which he is capable—a world



whose power of response to his aspirations is limited only by his capacity to aspire.

*How Man Draws from It.*

He had made himself an astral body by his desires and passions during earth-life, and he had to live in it during his astral existence, and that time was happy or miserable for him according to its character. Now his time of purgatory is over, for that lower part of his nature has burnt itself away; now there remain only the higher and more refined thoughts, the noble and unselfish aspirations that he poured out during earth-life. These cluster round him, and make a sort of shell about him, through the medium of which he is able to respond to certain types of vibration in this refined matter. These thoughts which surround him are the powers by which he draws upon the wealth of the heaven-world, and he finds it to be a storehouse of infinite extent upon which he is able to draw just according to the power of those thoughts and aspirations which he generated in the physical and astral life. All the highest of his affection and his devotion is now producing its result, for there is nothing else remaining in him; all that was selfish or grasping has been left behind in the plane of desire.

For there are two kinds of affection. There is one, hardly worthy of so sublime a name, which thinks always of how much love it is receiving in return for its investment of attachment, which is ever worrying as to the exact amount of affection which the other person is showing for it, and so is constantly entangled in the evil meshes of jealousy and suspicion. After death such feeling, grasping and full of greed, works out its results of doubt and misery upon the plane of desire, to which it so clearly belongs. But there is another kind of love, which

never stays to think how much it is loved, but has only the one object of pouring itself out unreservedly at the feet of the object of its affection, and considers only how best it can express in action the feeling which fills its heart so utterly. Here there is no limitation, because there is no grasping, no drawing towards the self, no thought of return, and just because of that, there is a tremendous outpouring of force, which no astral matter can express, nor can the dimensions of the astral plane contain it. It needs the finer matter and the wider space of the higher level, and so the energy generated belongs to the mental world. Just so there is a religious devotion which thinks mainly of what it will get for its prayers, and lowers its worship into a species of bargaining; while there is also the genuine devotion, which forgets itself absolutely in the contemplation of its deity.

We all know well that in our highest devotion there is something which has never yet been satisfied, that our grandest aspirations have never yet been realized, that when we really love unselfishly, our feeling is far beyond all power of expression on this physical plane, that the profound emotion stirred within our hearts by the noblest music or the most perfect art reaches to heights and depths unknown to this dull earth. Yet all of this is a wondrous force of power beyond our calculation, and it must produce its results somewhere, somehow, for the law of the conservation of energy holds good upon the higher planes of thought and aspiration just as surely as in ordinary mechanics. But since it must react upon him who set it in motion, and yet it cannot work upon the physical plane because of its narrowness and the comparative grossness of its matter, how and when can it produce its inevitable result? It simply waits for the man until he reaches its level; it remains as so much

stored-up energy until its opportunity arrives. While his consciousness is focussed upon the physical and astral planes it cannot react upon him, but as soon as he transfers himself entirely to the mental it is ready for him, its flood-gates are opened, and its action commences. So perfect justice is done, and nothing is ever lost, even though to us in this lower world it seems to have missed its aim and come to nothing. Far more beautifully than I could ever put it, this has been expressed by the poet Browning in *Abt Vogler*:—

There shall never be one lost good! what was shall live as before;  
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;  
 What was good shall be good with, for evil, so much good more;  
 On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round.  
 All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;  
 Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power  
 Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist  
 When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.  
 The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,  
 The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,  
 Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;  
 Enough that He heard it once; we shall hear it by-and-by.

That is precisely the Theosophical theory of the heaven-world, though it is written by one who is in no way connected with the Society and before the date of its foundation.

*The Windows of the Soul.*

The key-note of the conception is the comprehension of how man makes his own heaven. Here upon this plane of the Divine Mind exists, as we have said, all beauty and glory conceivable; but the man can look out upon it all only through the windows he himself has made. Every one of his thought-forms is such a window, through which response may come to him from the forces without. If he has chiefly regarded physical

things during his earth-life, then he has made for himself but few windows through which this higher glory can shine in upon him. Yet every man will have had some touch of pure, unselfish feeling, even if it were but once in all his life, and that will be a window for him now. Every man, except the utter savage at a very early stage, will as surely have something of this wondrous life of bliss. Instead of saying, as orthodoxy does, that some men will go to heaven, and some to hell, it would be far more correct to say that most men will have their share of *both* states (if we are to call even the lowest astral life by so horrible a name as hell), and it is only their relative proportions which differ.

It must be borne in mind that the soul of the ordinary man is as yet at but an early stage of his development. He has learnt to use his physical vehicle with comparative ease, and he can also function tolerably freely in his astral body, though he is rarely able to carry through the memory of its activities to his physical brain; but his mental body is not yet in any true sense a vehicle at all, since he cannot utilize it as he does those lower bodies, cannot travel about in it, nor employ its senses for the reception of information in the normal way.

#### *His Relation to the Plane.*

We must not think of him, therefore, as in a condition of any great activity, or as able to move about freely, as he did upon the astral levels. His condition here is chiefly receptive, and his communication with the world outside him is only through his own windows, and therefore exceedingly limited. The man who can put forth full activity here has already risen far above ordinary levels, for he must be a glorified spirit, a great and highly-evolved entity. He who has full consciousness here,

can use his mental vehicle as freely as the ordinary man employs his physical body, and through it vast fields of higher knowledge lie open to him.

But we are thinking of one as yet less developed than this—one who has his windows, and sees only through them. In order to understand his heaven we must consider two points, his relation to the plane itself, and his relation to his friends.

The question of his relation to his surroundings upon the plane divides itself into two parts, for we have to think first of the matter of the plane as moulded by his thought, and secondly of the forces of the plane as evoked in answer to his aspirations. In considering the astral plane we have seen how man surrounds himself with thought-forms; here on this plane we are in the very home of thought, so naturally those forms are all-important in connection with both these considerations. There are living forces about him here, mighty angelic inhabitants of the plane, and many of their orders are very sensitive to certain aspirations of man, and readily respond to them. But naturally both his thoughts and his aspirations are only along the lines which he has already prepared during earth-life. It might seem that when he was transferred to a plane of such transcendent force and vitality, he might well be stirred up to entirely new activities along hitherto unwonted lines, but this is not possible. His mind-body is not yet in by any means the same order as his lower vehicles, and is by no means so fully under his control. All through the past of many lives, it has been accustomed to receive its impressions and incitements to action from below, through the lower vehicles, chiefly from the physical body, and sometimes from the astral; it has done very little in the way of receiving direct mental vibrations at its own level, and it

cannot suddenly begin to accept and respond to them. Practically, then, the man does not initiate any new thoughts, but those which he has already form the windows through which he looks out on his new world.

*The Window of Music.*

With regard to these windows there are two possibilities of variation—the direction in which they look, and the kind of glass of which they are composed. There are very many directions which the higher thought may take. Some of these, such as affection and devotion, are so generally of a personal character that it is perhaps better to consider them in connection with the man's relation to other people. Let us rather take first an example where that element does not come in—where we have to deal only with the influence of his surroundings. Suppose that one of his windows into heaven is that of music. Here we have a very mighty force; we know how wonderfully music can uplift a man, can make him for the time a new being in a new world; if we have ever experienced its effect we shall realize that here we are in the presence of a stupendous power. The man who has no music in his soul has no window open in that direction, but the man who has a musical window will receive through it three entirely distinct types of impressions, all of which, however, will be modified by the kind of glass which he has in his window. It is obvious that his glass may be a great limitation to his view; it may be coloured, and so admit only certain rays of light, or it may be of poor material, and so distort and darken all the rays as they enter. For example, our man may have been able while on earth to appreciate only one class of music, and so on. But suppose his musical window to be a good one, what will he receive through it?

*Three Sources of Music.*

First, he will sense that music which is the expression of the ordered movement of the forces of the plane. There was a definite fact behind the poetic idea of the music of the spheres, for on these higher planes all movement and action of any kind produces glorious harmonies both of sound and colour. All thought expresses itself in this way—his own as well as that of others—in a lovely yet indescribable series of ever-changing chords, as of a thousand Æolian harps. This musical manifestation of the vivid and glowing life of heaven will be for him a kind of ever-present and ever-delightful background to all his other experiences.

Secondly, there is among the inhabitants of the plane one class of entities—one great order of angels, as our Christian friends would call them, who are specially devoted to music, and habitually express themselves by its means to a far fuller extent than the rest. They are spoken of in old Hindu books under the name of Gandharvas. The man whose soul is in tune with music will certainly attract their attention, and will draw himself into connection with some of them, and so will learn with ever-increasing enjoyment all the marvellous new combinations which they employ.

Thirdly, he will be a keenly appreciative listener to the music made by his fellow-men in the heaven-world. Think how many great composers have preceded him: Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Handel, Mozart, Rossini—all are there, not dead but full of vigorous life, and ever pouring forth far grander strains, far more glorious harmonies, than any which they knew on earth. Each of these is indeed a fountain of wondrous melody, and many an inspiration of our earthly musicians is in reality

but a faint and far-off echo of the sweetness of their song. Very far more than we realize of the genius of this lower world is naught but a reflection of the untrammelled powers of those who have gone before us; oftener than we think the man who is receptive here can catch some thought from them, and reproduce it, so far as may be possible, in this lower sphere. Great masters of music have told us how they sometimes hear the whole of some grand oratorio, some stately march, some noble chorus in one resounding chord; how it is in this way that the inspiration comes to them, though when they try to write it down in notes, many pages of music may be necessary to express it. That exactly defines the manner in which the heavenly music differs from that which we know here; one mighty chord there will convey what here would take hours to render far less effectively.

*Art in Heaven.*

Very similar would be the experiences of the man whose window was art. He also would have the same three possibilities of delight, for the order of the plane expresses itself in colour as well as in sound, and all Theosophical students are familiar with the fact that there is a colour language of the Devas—an order of spirits whose very communication one with another is by flashings of splendid colour. Again, all the great artists of mediæval times are working still—not with brush and canvas, but with the far easier yet infinitely more satisfactory moulding of mental matter by the power of thought. Every artist knows how far below the conception in his mind is the most successful expression of it upon paper or canvas; but there to think is to realize, and disappointment is impossible. The same thing is true of all directions of thought, so that there is in truth



an infinity to enjoy and to learn, far beyond all that our limited minds can grasp down here.

*Personal Relations.*

But let us turn to the second part of our subject, the question of the man's relations with persons whom he loves, or with those for whom he feels devotion or adoration. Again and again people ask us whether they will meet and know their loved ones in this grander life; whether amid all this unimaginable splendour they will look in vain for the familiar faces without which all would for them seem vanity. Happily, to this question the answer is clear and unqualified; the friends will be there without the least shadow of doubt, and far more fully, far more really, than ever they have been with us yet.

Yet again, men often ask, "What of our friends already in the enjoyment of the heaven-life; can they see us here below, are they watching us and waiting for us?" Hardly, for there would be difficulties in the way of either of those theories. How could the dead man be happy if he looked back and saw those whom he loved in sorrow or suffering, or, far worse still, in the commission of sin? And if we adopt the other alternative, that he does not see, but is waiting, the case is scarcely bettered. For then the man would have a long and wearisome period of waiting, a painful time of suspense, often extending over many years, while the friend would in many cases arrive so much changed as to be no longer sympathetic. On the system so wisely provided for us by nature all these difficulties are avoided; those whom the man loves most he has ever with him, and always at their noblest and best, while no shadow of discord or change can ever come between them, since he receives from them all the

time exactly what he wishes. The arrangement is infinitely superior to anything which the imagination of man has been able to offer us in its place; as indeed we might have expected, for all those speculations were man's idea of what is best, but the truth is God's idea. Let me try to explain it.

*The Action of Affection.*

Whenever we love a person very deeply we form a strong mental image of him, and he is often present in our mind. Inevitably we take this mental image into the heaven-world with us, because it is to that level of matter that it naturally belongs. But the love which forms and retains such an image is a very powerful force—a force which is strong enough to reach and to act upon the soul of that friend, the real man whom we love. That soul at once and eagerly responds, and pours himself into the thought-form which we have made for him, and in that way we find our friend truly present with us, more vividly than ever before. Remember, it is the soul that we love, not the body; and it is the soul that we have with us here. It may be said, "Yes, that would be so if the friend were also dead; but suppose he is still alive; he cannot be in two places at once." The fact is that, as far as this is concerned, he *can* be in two places at once, and often many more than two; and whether he is what we commonly call living, or what we commonly call dead, makes not the slightest difference. Let us try to understand what a soul really is, and we shall see better how this may be.

The soul belongs to a higher plane, and is a much greater and grander thing than any manifestation of it can be. Its relation to its manifestations is that of one dimension to another—that of a line to a square, or a

square to a cube. No number of squares could ever make a cube, because the square has only two dimensions, while the cube has three. So no number of expressions on any lower plane can ever exhaust the fulness of the soul, since he stands upon an altogether higher level. He puts down a small portion of himself into a physical body in order to acquire experience which can only be had on this plane; he can take only one such body at a time, for that is the law; but if he could take a thousand, they would not be sufficient to express what he really is. He can have only one physical body, but if you are his friend and he has evoked such love from you that after your death you have a strong mental image of him always present in your thought, then he is able to respond to that love by pouring into that thought-form his own life, and so vivifying it into a real expression of him on that level, which is two whole planes higher than the physical, and therefore so much the better able to express his qualities.

If it still seems difficult to realize how his consciousness can be active in that manifestation as well as in this, compare with this an ordinary physical experience. Each of us, as he sits in his chair, is conscious at the same instant of several physical contacts. He touches the seat of the chair, his feet rest on the ground, his hands feel the arms of the chair, or perhaps hold a book; and yet his brain has no difficulty in realizing all these contacts at once; why then should it be harder for the soul, which is so much greater than the mere physical consciousness, to be conscious simultaneously in more than one of these manifestations on planes so entirely below him? It is really the one man who feels all those different contacts; it is really the one man who fills all those different thought-images, and is real, living and

loving in all of them. We have him there always at his best, for this is a far fuller expression than the physical plane could ever give, even under the most favourable circumstances.

Will this affect the evolution of your friend in any way? it may be asked. Certainly it will, for it allows him an additional opportunity of manifestation. If he has a physical body he is already learning physical lessons through it, but at the very same time he is enabled to develop the quality of affection much more rapidly through the form on the mental plane which you have given him. So your love for him is doing great things for him. As we have said, the soul may manifest in many images, if he is fortunate enough to have them made for him. One who is much loved by many people may have part in many heavens simultaneously, and so may evolve with far greater rapidity; but this vast additional opportunity is the direct result and reward of those lovable qualities which drew towards him the affectionate regard of so many of his fellow-men. So not only does he receive love from all these, but through that himself grows in love, whether these friends be living or dead.

We should observe, however, that there are two possible limitations to the perfection of this intercourse: First, your image of your friend may be partial and imperfect, so that many of his higher qualities may not be represented, and may therefore be unable to show themselves forth through it. Then, secondly, there may be some difficulty from your friend's side. You may have formed a conception somewhat inaccurately; if your friend be as yet not a highly-evolved soul, it is possible even that you may have overrated him in some direction, and in that case there might be some aspect of your thought-image which he could not completely fill. This,

however, is unlikely, and could only take place when a quite unworthy object had been unwisely idolized. Even then you who made the image would not find any change or lack in your friend, for the latter, since he is expressing himself through a thought-image on the higher level of the mental plane, is at least better able to fulfil your ideal than he could ever be upon the physical plane. Being undeveloped, he may not be perfect, but at least he is greater than ever before, so nothing is wanting to the joy of the dweller in heaven. Your friend can fill hundreds of images with those qualities which he possesses, but when a quality is as yet undeveloped in him, he does not suddenly evolve it because you suppose him already to have attained it. Herein is the enormous advantage which those have who form images only of those who cannot disappoint them—or, since there could be no disappointment, we should rather say of those capable of rising above even the highest conception that the lower mind can form of them. The Theosophist who forms in his mind the image of the Master knows that all the inadequacy will be on his own side, for he is drawing there upon a depth of love and power which his mental plummet can never sound.

*Development in Heaven.*

But, it may be asked, since the soul spends so large a proportion of his time in the enjoyment of the bliss of this heaven-world, what are his opportunities of development during his stay there? They may be divided into three classes, though of each there may be many varieties. First, through certain qualities in himself he has opened certain windows into this heaven-world; by the continued exercise of those qualities through so long a time he will greatly strengthen them, and will return to earth

for his next incarnation very richly dowered in that respect. All thoughts are intensified by reiteration, and the man who spends a thousand years principally in pouring forth unselfish affection will assuredly at the end of that period know how to love strongly and well.

Secondly, if through his window he pours forth an aspiration which brings him into contact with one of the great orders of spirits, he will certainly acquire much from his intercourse with them. In music they will use all kinds of overtones and variants which were previously unknown to him; in art they are familiar with a thousand types of which he has had no conception. But all of these will gradually impress themselves upon him, and in this way also he will come out of that glorious heaven-life richer far than he entered it.

Thirdly, he will gain additional information through the mental images which he has made, if those people themselves are sufficiently developed to be able to teach him. Once more, the Theosophist who has made the image of a Master will obtain very definite teaching and help through it, and in a lesser degree this is possible with lesser people.

Even when a person has conceived great devotion for some mythical hero—some saint, perhaps, who never really existed—it is still possible that he may obtain benefit through it, for some angel or helper may ensoul the image which he has made, and through it give him happiness and development.

### *The True Life of the Soul.*

Above and beyond all this comes the life of the soul or ego in his own causal body—the vehicle which he carries on with him from life to life, unchanging except for its gradual evolution. There comes an end even to that

glorious heaven-life, and then the mental body in its turn drops away as the others have done, and the life in the causal begins. Here the soul needs no windows, for this is his true home, and here all his walls have fallen away. The majority of men have as yet but very little consciousness at such a height as this; they rest, dreamily unobservant and scarcely awake, but such vision as they have is true, however limited by their lack of development. Still, every time they return these limitations will be smaller, and they themselves will be greater, so that this truest life will be wider and fuller for them. As the improvement continues, this causal life grows longer and longer, assuming an ever-larger proportion as compared to the existence at lower levels. And as he grows the man becomes capable not only of receiving but of giving. Then indeed is his triumph approaching, for he is learning the lesson of the Christ, learning the crowning glory of sacrifice, the supreme delight of pouring out all his life for the helping of his fellow-men, the devotion of the self to the all, of celestial strength to human service, of all these splendid heavenly forces to the aid of struggling sons of earth. That is part of the life that lies before us; these are some of the steps which even we, who are as yet at the very bottom of the golden ladder, may see rising above us, so that we may report them to those who have not seen them yet, in order that they too may open their eyes to the unimaginable splendour which surrounds them here and now in this dull daily life. This is part of the gospel which Theosophy brings to the Western world—the certainty of this sublime future for all. It is certain because it is here already, because to inherit it we have only to fit ourselves for it.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE.

When the Theosophical explanation of the life after death is first presented to a man, he is often much attracted by it, but at the same time somewhat startled at the boldness and definiteness of its assertions, and he naturally asks us by what evidence we have been so strongly convinced of these truths, and how it is possible for him to obtain a similar conviction. I am always especially anxious to meet and to help in the most friendly manner a man who approaches us in this spirit, though I confess that in the aggressive and blatant sceptic I feel but little interest. When a man seems to think that he is doing me a favour by believing what I say, when he says, "Convince me by doing so and so," I always feel inclined to reply, "My dear sir, why in the world *should* I convince you? Your belief or unbelief is naught to me! I state what I know to be facts; hundreds of other persons at different times and places have seen similar facts. Believe or not, as you like; what possible difference can your faith or incredulity make either to the facts or to me? It is true that it may make a good deal of difference to *you*; but that is your affair, and not mine."

But for the man who is honestly anxious to believe, and is searching for a definite basis for such belief, we have always in Theosophy the most cordial of welcomes, and it is to him that I am addressing myself in this chapter. It may perhaps be useful if I begin by explaining exactly how I myself reached that conviction, for it



seems to me that the experience of a man who has sought the truth with some measure of success along certain lines can hardly fail to be of some interest and some use to others who are studying along similar lines.

*A Personal Experience.*

At the time when Theosophical truth first came in my way, I was a clergyman of the Church of England, and I might be one still if I had not begun to think about certain things of which it is not well to think if one wishes to remain orthodox. I had, as part of my duties, to prepare young men for what is called confirmation, and sometimes these young men would have doubts to be solved and questions to ask, based usually upon the works of Thomas Paine or Bradlaugh. I was always able to answer these enquiries to the satisfaction of the questioners, but not entirely to my own satisfaction, for when I thought critically over some of the arguments which I found myself using—the stock arguments which are always used—I was forced to admit that they were not such as I should have accepted in connection with any other subject. I felt that if some one came to me and offered me for any ordinary historical event the evidence that is put forward for the gospel story, I should instantly reject it as utterly insufficient. But since the whole theory of eternal salvation appeared to be based upon this alleged history, this uncertainty seemed to be a serious matter, for it left me with the uncomfortable feeling that I might be teaching that which was not true. The only thing to do was evidently to study the matter more deeply, and to see what the wise men of the Church had said on these points.

The result was very disappointing, for they have said practically nothing—nothing, that is, of any value to the

enquirer. There is a great deal of vigorous assertion, and much denunciation of the wickedness of those who dare to doubt; but there is nothing whatever that would be accepted as evidence or argument in any other connection. Nothing is said that really meets any one of the difficulties, and when a man's attention and critical faculty are once aroused, he sees at once that the whole scheme as proposed for his acceptance by orthodoxy is an unreasonable one, and that no shred of evidence is producible in its favour. All alleged proofs break in his hands when he subjects them to more than superficial examination, and he finds that there is no certainty for anything anywhere—a terrible thing for a man to discover with regard to the religion in which he has been brought up; for he feels as though all his convictions had been torn up by the roots, and nothing was left to him.

Personally I was not in so bad a position as many men when this came to me, because previous to this I had investigated spiritualism, and therefore I *knew* that some things were true. Still, looked at in the cold, calm light of reason, the story of the creation, of the insensate anger of the creator and of the alleged necessity of salvation from this fury by the extraordinary expedient of a vicarious atonement, all looked strange and unreasonable when divested of the sanctity of the dim religious light of time-honoured custom; and so this fantastic jumble of “fragments of a faith forgotten” left me, as it has left so many others, without any real satisfaction.

#### *How Light Came.*

Just at this time—by chance, as it seemed, except that I believe there is no such thing as chance—I met with a book by Mr. Sinnett called *The Occult World*, and found

in its suggestions of a magnificent scheme of philosophy which at once attracted my attention and aroused my deepest interest. It was more fully explained in a second book, *Esoteric Buddhism*, and as soon as I read it I noticed several points in which it completely differed from anything which had been offered to me so far. I was acquainted so far with two theories, the materialistic idea that everything is ruled by blind chance, and the orthodox theory that men are placed in happiness or misery, in civilization or savagery, in criminal surroundings or in respectability, simply according to Divine caprice.

Both of these were eminently unsatisfactory, for neither of them seemed in the least reasonable, and there were many phenomena that they entirely failed to explain. The caprice theory has been so thoroughly disposed of by the writings of Colonel Ingersoll and others that I need hardly point out the manifold objections to it; the materialistic system I knew to be defective, because I had myself seen many phenomena for which it failed to account. Here was a third hypothesis which certainly had immense advantages, for it explained all the difficulties as to which the others had failed, it really did account rationally for the conditions which we see around us, it gave an intelligible scheme of development which included the past, present and future of man, and at the same time it agreed with the general trend of scientific thought. Here for the first time I encountered a reasonable philosophy, according to which it was possible to believe that God was all-powerful and all-loving without having to shut one's eyes to all the facts of life.

Naturally I seized upon this theory at once, since it seemed so obviously the best of the three, and proceeded to enquire further. I found my way to Mr. Sinnett, by whom I was received with the ever-ready courtesy and

affectionate interest which all his friends know so well, and through him I was enabled to join the Theosophical Society. There was very little Theosophical literature then; in those earlier days we had not all the manuals with their detailed explanations which make the study so much easier now, and besides the two books which I have already mentioned, we had only *Isis Unveiled* and *The Perfect Way*.

We asked how this knowledge had come to the West, and heard that it was through Madame Blavatsky from some great Oriental teachers. We found that the Indian philosophy was far in advance of any that we had previously known—far in advance of anything that orthodoxy gives us now, though not of the true early Christian teachings, as contained in the writings of the great Gnostic Doctors. But the ignorant majority in the early Church cast out these great Gnostics, and since then their religion is left without anything to offer to the thinking man. Every religion ought to be able to meet the needs of all classes, the poor and ignorant on the one hand, and the cultured and philosophically-minded on the other. You will find that every religion has applied itself to meet these two classes, and has had its plain ethical teaching for those who could understand nothing more, but has always been prepared to supplement that by metaphysical instruction for those who were capable of looking deeper into the heart of things. Christianity was in no way behind the other religions in this respect originally, for it had its secret teaching for those who had proved themselves worthy of it, but in these degenerate days the Church has largely forgotten its birthright. I must not allow myself to be lured down this fascinating by-path now; but it is a subject of the greatest interest. I have treated it already in my book upon *The Christian*

*Creed*, and Mrs. Besant has dealt with it most ably in *Esoteric Christianity*.

*A Possibility of Progress.*

Madame Blavatsky told us that there had always been a body of men who knew the great truths of nature, and were therefore in a position to teach others. She said that, so far from these truths being new, they were old as the world itself. Was there more that we could learn? Perhaps; for these great Masters of Wisdom sometimes took pupils, and any man whose life was devoted to the service of humanity might hope some day to be accepted as one of those. As to this Madame Blavatsky could promise us nothing, for the matter remained entirely in the hands of the Masters themselves; but men *had* been accepted, and therefore there was always hope for others who were willing to take the trouble to fit themselves for higher development. I felt that a commonplace man like myself could hardly dare to hope for such honour in this incarnation; but in the meantime there was plenty to study, and at least I could work for this cause which seemed to me so far greater than any other that I had yet seen. So I gave up my position in the Church, and went out to India with Madame Blavatsky, to work in the office of the Society at the Headquarters. I expected nothing but this opportunity to work for the cause, and I had no idea at that time that any further advancement was possible for me in this life.

In India it was my privilege to meet some of the great Teachers, and from them and from their pupils I learnt very much more than I had known before, and began to gain a fuller grasp of the system. Presently I received hints as to how to raise the consciousness to higher planes. I had had no expectation of this, as I

had supposed that one needed to be born with special faculties in order to attain success along that line; but I was told that such powers were latent in every human being, and that if I worked at them with sufficient energy I might develop them. Naturally I took the hint, went to work at once, and in process of time found that all that had been told me was true—that it was possible to develop astral and mental sight, and by their means to verify at once the principal teachings of Theosophy.

Any one who is willing to work at it as I worked may come to know, as I know, that the planes of Nature are definite facts; he may know the truth of the teaching as to states after death, for he will see and speak to the so-called dead, and meet them on their own plane; and it is far more satisfactory for him thus to rise to their level than to drag them down again to his own by materialization. He may know the great facts of reincarnation, for he may learn to look back on his own past lives, spread before him as the pages of a book. He may verify for himself without shadow of doubt the action of the mighty laws of evolution and of Divine justice. All these things I know for myself by personal observation, and so may any man who is willing to take the trouble and to tread the Path. I do not say that he will find it easy; I do not say that it can be done quickly; but I do say that many have done it, and that every man has the powers latent within him and may succeed if he will. How he would have to begin his effort I shall explain later.

#### *No Hallucination.*

It may be said that in thinking I know these things I may be hallucinated. Of course theoretically that may be true; I may be hallucinated at this moment when I

think that I am writing, and my readers may also be under the influence of hallucination when they think that they have my book before their eyes; indeed, some philosophers argue that we are all hallucinations ourselves; but if we really exist, if I have written and you are reading, then it is also true that I have seen these things and know them. I have seen them not once, but hundreds of times; they are daily facts in my experience. To many of us these other planes are known just as a man knows the streets of his own city, and we can no more doubt them than a man can doubt the existence of the town in which he lives. If Theosophy be an illusion, it is one which has been shared by some of the greatest minds of the world, by such men as Buddha, Sankarâchârya, Pythagoras. It would be rather a serious assumption to accuse all these of hallucination. For myself I am fully satisfied upon this point; but I quite recognize that though I have proved these things to my own satisfaction, my mere assertion is not in any way a proof to other men. Yet it is a piece of evidence, of which they should take account along with other evidence.

There are many who are deeply interested in the study of Theosophy for whom a visit to India would be an impossibility; and besides, it is obvious that a man might spend a lifetime in India without necessarily encountering the same experiences which came to me. So it is natural for men to ask what proof there is available for them short of this direct personal experience of which I have spoken. I myself believe that short of experience there is no direct proof of such matters as these, but assuredly there is very much evidence. These things may be known just as exactly and definitely as we know the majority of facts in science, in which we all believe without question. On this subject I should advise every

student to read carefully Mr. Fullerton's most admirable pamphlet on *The Proofs of Theosophy*, and follow closely the unanswerable arguments by which he shows that the proof of any proposition must be congruous with the nature of the proposition, and that consequently the final proof of the deepest of the Theosophical doctrines must always lie in the experience of the evolved soul. Yet though in the ultimate this must always be so, there is still a great deal of confirmatory evidence to be had, as I hope presently to show.

*Proofs for Orthodoxy.*

Those who, ignoring the law of congruity, persist in demanding for psychological problems and theories a demonstration along mathematical lines, or a proof on the physical plane which they can hold in their hands, would do well to consider upon what evidence they hold their own inherited convictions, if they are not afraid to face the question. When we come to ask for proofs of the orthodox theory of life, where are they? There are simply none, and as a general rule no one professing that faith even pretends that there are, but simply remarks that it is wicked to ask for them, and that doubt is a temptation of the devil!

The practice of orthodoxy has been always to condemn reason, and to endeavour to force men to adopt its conclusions, recognizing no way but its own, and no possibility that it may be mistaken, or that any one else can ever have known anything. I do not in the least wish to hurt the feelings of any loyal believer, but what I am saying here is simply indisputable, and has been confirmed over and over again in the history of the Christian churches. This theology is based upon a book which is obviously self-contradictory and is known by



every scholar to be incorrect; indeed, in many cases one might suppose that its professors had taken for their motto the celebrated saying of one of them, "*Credo quia impossibile*"—I believe it *because* it is impossible! It asserts so many things that it does not know, and so many things that cannot possibly be known, and would moreover be of no conceivable importance to any human being even if they could be known.

On the really important questions which vitally affect every one of us no shred of evidence is ever offered. As I said in an earlier chapter, not one preacher in all the churches will tell you that he himself has been to heaven or to hell, and knows of his own knowledge that such places exist as he describes them. He will say simply "The Church teaches this," or "It is written thus in the Bible." I venture to say that this is no sufficient evidence upon which to pin a faith which, they tell us, is to settle the question of our eternal salvation; that seems somewhat too important a matter to rest upon so insecure a foundation. In Theosophy we at least put forward nothing that we do not ourselves know to be true by direct personal observation.

But does theology at least account reasonably for everything that happens? Has it a clear, rational answer to offer to the questions which arise in every thinking mind with regard to the problems of life? On the contrary, it does not even attempt to suggest an answer; it can only say that this is God's will, and that man must submit without daring to enquire why. If we can get no more information than that, we are indeed in a parlous condition. The materialistic hypothesis gives us, if possible, even less satisfaction, for it also attempts no explanation, but cynically refers us to a law of chances; but at least it adjures us to live well, not for the sake of

any future gain to ourselves, but in order to benefit the race—which is a noble and unselfish idea.

Theosophy asks no blind faith from any one, but simply offers for consideration a theory which is reasonable in itself, and does account for the facts which we see around us. It is based not only on the tradition and teaching of many ages, but also on the reports of those who definitely state that they know certain things for themselves. Which of these three theories shall we accept? Obviously the rational answer is that we should provisionally accept the most reasonable, use it as a working hypothesis, and begin to look round for confirmations of it. If we do so, we shall be surprised to see how these confirmations appear on every hand.

#### *Non-Physical Facts.*

There are many occurrences, commonly regarded as mysterious, which the other systems find themselves compelled either to ignore or to deny; Theosophy welcomes these, as it does all other facts, finds a place for them in its system, and accounts for them in a rational manner. Among these are the facts of spiritualism, of apparitions and doubles, of mesmerism and telepathy. Materialism, being unable to explain these, takes refuge in denial of their existence—which is both disingenuous and foolish. A man may possibly not think it worth his while to examine these facts; but if he will not take that trouble, he has no right to assert that those who do examine, and testify to the reality of the occurrences, are either mistaken or fraudulent. Such an attitude resembles that credited to the ostrich, who is said to hide his head in the sand when danger is near, thinking that when he can no longer see it, it must have ceased to exist. As Mr. Stead remarks in the passage already

quoted from his *Real Ghost Stories*, all honest enquirers *know* that these things happen, though they may have a hundred different theories to account for them.

The Christian theory has little to say about these facts. Sometimes it also denies them; sometimes it admits them, but attributes them to the devil, as it always attributed everything which it could not understand. In any of the older countries where Christianity has long existed, we find that all the marvels of Nature are almost invariably ascribed to diabolical influence. The circular bed of a prehistoric lake in Hampshire is called the Devil's Punchbowl; certain isolated spears of rock in Yorkshire are known as the Devil's Arrows; the truncated root of a certain species of scabious is called by the peasantry devil's-bit; and so in many other cases. Mediæval ignorance is in many ways still rampant among us, and the silly old parrot-cry of "the devil" is still raised in the twentieth century. But since we are speaking of proof, what proof is there of the existence of this same devil of which they talk so glibly? Who has ever seen him? But orthodoxy does not like to be asked for proofs.

Again, if we tell you that direct proof of many of these facts is obtainable only by personal experience, we are saying no more than is true with regard to scientific matters. In nearly all that we believe along such lines, we have not made the experiments for ourselves, but we are relying on the testimony of experts; and it is inevitable that it should be so, for life is not long enough to allow every man to become a specialist along all possible lines. We cannot all experiment for ourselves, but we accept the deductions of those who have made the experiments when they are in accordance with the general principles of evolution and in harmony with such facts

as we already know. This is all that any one is asked to do with regard to Theosophy.

*A Philosophical Scheme.*

What facts are there then which bear out its teachings as being true? There are very many. Perhaps we may usefully divide its doctrines into two parts for the purpose of such examination, and consider them separately. We may think of its scheme of philosophy, and for the moment leave all its more practical side out of our consideration. Then it is clear that this philosophy must be judged as are other philosophies, and that for much of it nothing like direct or physical proof can be expected. We do not expect to demonstrate philosophy on a slate, like a problem in arithmetic; we judge it by its inherent probability, and by the degree in which it gives a rational explanation of known conditions; and when tested by these criteria, it must certainly be admitted by any unprejudiced person that Theosophy far outdistances its competitors.

Consider its presentation of the glorious scheme of evolution under an inexorable law of divine justice, its teaching that what we commonly call the life of man is only one day of a larger life, and that that larger life in turn is part of a coherent whole, which is ever moving onward and upward towards its appointed end. Surely that is grander than the thought of a blind chance which whirls us all to nothingness, or of a plan of "salvation" which fails so miserably that nine-tenths of the human race are hurled into endless perdition! Now among those who are rather afraid of psychology, or at any rate prefer not to investigate it, there may yet be many minds willing to accept and consider such a system of philosophy as this. In that case by all means let them take it,

and leave the rest of our doctrines until their interest in them is awakened. Remember always that we have no creed in Theosophy to which every student is expected to subscribe; we ask no one to believe anything, but simply offer a system for his study; and it is of course open to him to take up one part of this and put aside the rest.

### *Our Psychology.*

There are those who accept our system of psychology without special investigation, on the same grounds as the philosophy, because it is the simplest explanation of recorded facts, and of the many unclassified phenomena which are so constantly happening. But there are others who desire to investigate for themselves, and very reasonably. How can they do this? They may approach the matter as I did myself, by examining direct evidence, and trying to see for themselves as far as possible. They may visit spiritualistic séances, they may write to or interview those people who are known to have had extraordinary experiences in connection with the unseen world. Or, if they are not willing to give this much time and trouble, they may read the literature of both spiritualism and apparitions—and there is an enormous literature of both subjects—and thus obtain the evidence of their fellow-men at second-hand, precisely as we do with other sciences. To study geography it is not necessary to visit in person all the countries of which we hear, though no doubt it would be interesting to do so; most of us are quite willing to read and accept what others have written who have visited them.

Perhaps we hardly realize how entirely we are in the habit of accepting the testimony of others about things which we suppose that we know. A ready instance of

this is the question of the rotation of the earth. We should most of us say that we know this to be a fact, but in truth all the evidence presented to our senses is absolutely opposed to the theory. Here we are, sitting or standing on the earth, and it seems evident to us that it is absolutely at rest; indeed, *terra firma* is with us a very synonym of stability. The sun and the stars seem to move round us, and the natural conclusion would be that they do really move. So we do not know that the earth moves; we only believe it, unless we happen to have seen certain experiments. There is the Foucault pendulum experiment, and another with the gyroscope; a man who has seen those *knows* that the earth rotates, because he has seen two experiments which could not have resulted as they did on any other hypothesis; but the rest of us are simply believing.

So in daily life there are many things which we say we know, which in reality we only believe. There are far more witnesses to the reality and existence of the astral plane than there are to the existence of the island of Spitzbergen, or of the pygmy race which Stanley found in Central Africa. Remember how Du Chaillu had seen and described this pygmy race a quarter of a century before Stanley, and how every one ridiculed his story as a mere traveller's tale; and yet it was perfectly true. No one was obliged to go to Central Africa to see those pygmies; but unless they were willing to do so, they had no right to disbelieve Du Chaillu, who had been—or rather, their own private opinion was entirely their own business, but they had no right to accuse Du Chaillu of falsehood when they had taken no steps themselves to discover the truth. So with regard to Theosophy, we do not press those to investigate its assertions who feel no interest in them; but we do say that they

should neither on the one hand deny their truth without enquiring into them, nor on the other hand demand with regard to them a type of proof which they do not expect in connection with any similar subject of study.

*Unexpected Corroborations.*

It constantly happens to us to find unexpected corroborations turning up for statements made years ago by Madame Blavatsky, and at the time ridiculed as unscientific. The same thing is true with regard to the later investigations. Take for one example the case of the two planets beyond the orbit of Neptune, which are mentioned by Mr. Sinnett in his book *The Growth of the Soul*, published six or seven years ago. No one outside of the band of occult students suspected their existence at that time, but in the *Times* of September 15th, 1902, it is mentioned that Professor Forbes has pointed out that there are two cometary groups which indicate the existence of two planets beyond Neptune. This is a small point, but it is suggestive, and it is only a specimen of many others. Again, there was the question of the rotation of Venus. When I was at school we were taught that Venus had a day and night very similar to that of the earth, but later astronomical research seemed to show that it kept one face always turned towards the sun, just as the moon does with regard to the earth. This would make it practically uninhabitable for beings at all like ourselves, and therefore seemed to contradict our knowledge that it was inhabited by an advanced evolution. Recently, however, Sir Robert Ball stated that the latest observations confirmed the original idea that Venus revolved as we do, so once more the occult explanation was shown to be the true one.

*A Theosophical Scientist.*

Science generally is undoubtedly growing gradually towards the Theosophical theories. Notice these extracts from an address recently delivered by Sir Oliver Lodge at Birmingham: "The fact that we should not have any definite knowledge of the sun if the sky had always been cloudy, Sir Oliver used as a parable to indicate that there may be other existences in the universe which we might see if our senses were keener and nothing obscured our vision. What we saw and knew was in all probability a minute fraction of what there was to know and see. Wherever life was possible there we found it; might not life be possible in planets upon which we had no direct evidence of the existence of life? Some people thought that science negatived the possibility of there being existences and agencies higher than man. As far as he had understood science, it had no business to negative anything of the kind. When a man did not know, he had no right to make an assertion either in the positive or the negative. How life originated on the earth was an entire mystery to science at present, but he did not think it would always remain a mystery. The process of evolution was not one that excluded or negatived the idea of Divine activity. It was, he ventured to say, a revelation to us of the manner of Divine activity. How could order come out of chaos without some guiding intelligence? With regard to the method of Divine working, they must infer that He always worked in the same way—by agents, by a gradual process, and not by occasional direct personal intervention. He did not suppose that at any stage the process of evolution was different from what it was now. Thus they were interested in watching Divine activity, and they should not look



for it in the past alone, but be guided by what they could ascertain in the present. What he wished them to realize was that they were an intelligent, helpful and active part of the cosmic scheme. They were among the agents of the Creator, and could make themselves more useful by co-operation—by helping one another. While on this training-ground they should realize the privilege of existence. In the midst of so much suffering, it was a pity if they could not be kind to each other.” We see how much there is in the very latest scientific pronouncements which is quite in harmony with the Theosophical teaching.

*Not a Blind Faith.*

It might seem that after all, for the majority of our students, who do not yet see psychically for themselves, the Theosophical teachings must rest upon faith, just as orthodox doctrines do. There is a sense in which that is true, but the kind of faith is so different that no comparison can be made. If our students, or some of them, accept as true certain things which they have not seen, their faith is not blind, but based on reason. It is not founded merely on a scripture—though if scriptures are required, we have them to support our views, and they are scriptures older far than those of the Jews: Vedas and Upanishads, coming to us down the stream of time from a nation which was at the height of civilization when the Jews were yet an obscure and undeveloped Arab tribe. But it is not on these alone that our faith is based, but on the knowledge and teaching of great Adepts of the present day—men who are almost more than men in the splendour of their power and their wisdom, teachers well and personally known to many of our members. In addition to all this we have the direct

investigations pursued by some of our European members, all confirming at every point this grand Theosophical system.

Yet the reason for the strong conviction of our members is not the weight of testimony, important though that may be, but the fact that the system is in itself so inherently rational and satisfactory. The best hypothesis holds the field in all scientific study until a better one is found; and it is from that point of view that we feel our faith to be impregnable. Show us a better and more reasonable doctrine, and we all stand ready to accept it; but we have little expectation that it will be offered to us, for we have studied many faiths, and know of what nature most of them are. Instead of finding difficulties arising, the more we think and the more we study, the more corroborations we find for our teachings. So many people are already developing psychic faculties to a greater or less extent that it should not be hard for most of us to find additional corroborations for ourselves. Many of us have had experiences outside the mere physical, and many more of us know of friends or relations who have had such experiences. Theosophy can explain these, and can give a rational account of their place in Nature; can any other explanation be found which is better or clearer?

To the enquirer who is sufficiently interested to be willing to take some trouble I should suggest that he would do well to begin by examining into the evidence for other states of matter than the physical, and other forces than those at present recognized by science. He may approach the subjects of telepathy and mesmerism, for example, and he can (as I said before) either himself investigate them by personal experiments or by study of the literature of the subject.

If he is satisfied with his studies so far, he would do well next to approach the consideration of the existence of the different planes in nature; and he would naturally begin by seeking for evidence that there is an unseen world all about us—in fact, in trying to prove to himself the astral plane.

Since this world is normally invisible to us, it is obvious that he will have to commence by the examination of the abnormal occasions when for the moment it declares itself—to investigate the borderland between the two countries, as it were. This will lead him to the consideration of the subjects to which our previous chapters have been devoted, and he must enquire into apparitions and into spiritualism—either personally, as I did, or through the eyes of those who have seen and recorded.

But such enquiries in no way prevent him from making simultaneous efforts at self-training, such as may in due time enable him to appreciate the normal astral life as well as to study its abnormal manifestations. We will consider this in our final chapter.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### HOW CLAIRVOYANCE IS DEVELOPED.

When a man has studied the subject of clairvoyance sufficiently to realize that the claims made on its behalf are true, his next enquiry usually is, "How can I gain this power for myself? If this faculty be latent in every man, as you say, how can I so develop myself as to bring it into action, and so have direct access to all this knowledge of which you tell me?" In reply we can assure him that this thing can be done, and that it has been done. There are even many ways in which the faculty may be gained, though most of them are unsafe and eminently undesirable, and there is only one that can be thoroughly and unreservedly recommended to all men alike. But that we may understand the subject, and see where lie the dangers that have to be avoided, let us consider exactly what it is that has to be done.

In the case of all cultured people belonging to the higher races of the world, the faculties of the astral body are already fully developed, as I have explained in earlier chapters. But we are not in the least in the habit of using them; they have slowly grown up within us during the ages of our evolution, but they have come to us so gradually that we have not as yet realized our powers, and they are still to a great extent untried weapons in our hands. The physical faculties, to which we are thoroughly accustomed, overshadow these others and hide their very existence, just as the nearer light of the sun hides from our eyes the light of the far-distant stars.

So that there are two things to be done if we wish to enter into this part of our heritage as evolved human beings; we must keep our too-insistent physical faculties out of the way for the time, and we must habituate ourselves to the employment of these others, which are as yet unfamiliar to us.

The first step, then, is to get the physical senses out of the way for the time. There are many ways of doing this, but broadly they all range themselves under two heads—one comprising methods by which they are forced out of the way by temporary violent suppression, and the other including methods, much slower but infinitely surer, by which we ourselves gain permanent control over them. Most of the methods of violent suppression are injurious to the physical body, to a greater or less extent, and they all have certain undesirable characteristics in common. One of these is that they leave the man in a passive condition, able perhaps to use his higher senses, but with very little choice as to how he shall employ them, and to a large extent undefended against any unpleasant or evil influence which he may happen to encounter.

Another characteristic is that any power gained by these methods can at best be only temporary. Many of them confer it only during the limited period of their action, and even the best of them can only dower the man with certain faculties during this one physical life. In the East, where they have studied these matters for so many centuries, they divide methods of development into two classes, just as I have done, and they call them by the names *laukika* and *lokothra*, the first being the "worldly" or temporary method, any results gained by which will inhere only in the personality, and therefore be available only for this present physical life, while

whatever is obtained by the second process is gained by the ego, the soul, the true man, and so is a permanent possession for evermore, carried over from one earthly life to another. For most methods of the former class little training is required, and when there is training it is of the vehicles only, and so at the best it can affect only this present set of vehicles, and when the man returns into incarnation with a fresh set all his trouble will be lost; whereas by the second method it is the soul itself which is trained in the control of its vehicles, and naturally it can apply the power and the knowledge thus gained to its new vehicles in the next life. I will enumerate first some of the undesirable ways in which clairvoyance is developed in various countries.

#### *Undesirable Methods.*

Among non-Aryan tribes in India it is often obtained by the use of drugs—bhang, haschish and others of the same kind. These stupefy the physical body something as anæsthetics do, and thus the man in his astral vehicle is set free as he would be in sleep, but with far less possibility of being awakened. Before taking the drug, the man has set his mind strongly on the endeavour to train his astral senses into activity, and so as soon as he is free he tries to use his faculties, and with practice he succeeds to some extent. When he awakens his physical body, he remembers more or less of his visions, and tries to interpret them, and in that way he often obtains a great reputation for clairvoyance and prevision. Sometimes while in his trance he may be spoken through by some dead man, just as any other medium may be. There are others who obtain the same condition by inhaling stupefying fumes, usually produced by the burning of a mixture of drugs. It is probable that the clair-

voyance of the pythonesses of old was often of this type. It is stated that in the case of one of the most celebrated of those oracles of ancient days, the priestess sat always upon a tripod exactly over a crack in the rock, out of which vapour ascended. After breathing this vapour for a time, she became entranced, and some one then spoke through her organs in the ordinary way so familiar to the visitors to séances. It is not difficult for us to see how undesirable both these methods are from the point of view of real development.

Probably most of us have heard of the dancing der-vishes, one part of whose religion consists in this curious dance of ecstasy, in which they whirl round and round in a kind of frenzy until vertigo seizes them, and they eventually fall insensible to the ground. In that trance, worked up as they are by religious fervour, they frequently have most extraordinary visions, and are able to some extent to experience and remember lower astral conditions. I have seen something of this, and also of the practices of the Obeah or Voodoo votaries among the negroes; but these latter are usually connected with magical ceremonies, loathsome, indecent, horrible, such as none of us would dream of touching for any purpose, whatever results might be promised to us. Yet they certainly do produce results under favourable conditions, though not such results as any of us could possibly wish to obtain. Indeed, none of the methods mentioned so far would at all commend themselves to us, though I have heard of Europeans who have experimented with the Oriental drugs.

Nevertheless we also have undesirable methods in the West—methods of self-hypnotization which should be carefully avoided by all who wish to develop in purity and safety. A person may be told to gaze for some time

at a bright spot until paralysis of some of the brain-centres supervenes, and in that way he is cast into a condition of perfect passivity, in which it is possible that the lower astral senses may come into a measure of activity. Naturally he has no power of selection in receiving under such circumstances; he must submit himself to whatever comes in his way, good or bad—and on the whole it is much more likely to be bad than good! Sometimes the same general result is obtained by the recitation of certain formulæ, the repetition of which over and over again deadens the mental faculty almost as the gazing at a metal disc does.

*Lord Tennyson's Method.*

It may be remembered that the poet Tennyson tells us that he was able by the recitation of his own name many times in rapid succession to pass into another condition of consciousness. The account is given in a letter in the poet's handwriting which is dated Faringford, Freshwater, Isle of Wight, May 7th, 1874. It was written to a gentleman who had communicated to him certain strange experiences he had had when passing from under the effect of anæsthetics. Tennyson says:

"I have never had any revelations through anæsthetics, but a kind of waking trance (this for lack of a better name) I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has often come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till all at once out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being; and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words, where death was an



almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life. I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? This is the most emphatic declaration that the spirit of the writer is capable of transferring itself into another state of existence, is not only real, clear, simple, but that it is also infinite in vision and eternal in duration."

Now here is undoubtedly a touch of the higher life; no one who has practical experience of realities can fail to recognize the description as far as it goes, even though the poet stops short just on the brink of something so infinitely grander. He seems to have held himself more positive than do many people who dabble in these matters without the necessary instruction or knowledge, and so he gained a valuable certainty of the existence of the soul apart from the body; yet even his method cannot be commended as good or really safe.

### *Breathing Exercises.*

We are sometimes told that such a faculty can be developed by means of exercises which regulate the breathing, and that this plan is one largely adopted and recommended in India. It is true that a type of clairvoyance may be developed along these lines, but too often at the cost of ruin both physical and mental. Many attempts of this sort have been made in Europe and America. This I know personally, because many who have ruined their constitutions, and in some cases brought themselves to the verge of insanity, have come to me to know how they could be cured. Some have succeeded in opening astral vision sufficiently to feel themselves perpetually haunted; some have not even reached that point, yet have wrecked their physical health or weak-

ened their minds so that they are in utter despair; some one or two declare that such practice has been beneficial to them.

It is true that such exercises are employed in India by the Hatha Yogis—those who attempt to attain development rather by physical means than by inner growth of the mental and the spiritual. But even among them such practices are used only under the direct orders of responsible teachers, who watch the effect upon the pupil of what is prescribed, and will at once stop him if the exercises prove unsuitable for him. But for people who know nothing at all of the subject to attempt such things indiscriminately is most unwise and dangerous, for practices which are useful for one man may very well be disastrous for another. They may suit one man in fifty, but they are extremely likely not to suit the rest, and myself I should advise every one to abstain from them unless directed to try them by a competent teacher who really understands what they are intended to achieve. He who tries them may be the one man whom they will suit, but the probabilities are against it, for there are far more failures than successes. It is so fatally easy to do a great deal of harm in this way, that to experiment vaguely is rather like going into a chemist's shop and taking down drugs at random; we might happen to hit upon exactly what we needed, but also we might not, and the latter is many times more probable.

#### *Mesmerism.*

Another method by which clairvoyance may be developed is by mesmerism—that is to say, if a person be thrown by another into a mesmeric trance it is possible that in that trance he may see astrally. The mesmerizer entirely dominates his will, and the physical faculties

are thrown utterly into abeyance. That leaves the field open, and the mesmerist can at the same time stimulate the astral senses by pouring vitality into the astral body. Good results have been produced in this way, but it requires a very unusual combination of circumstances, an almost superhuman development of purity in thought and intention both in the operator and the subject, to make the experiment a safe one. The mesmerist gains great influence over his subject—a far greater power than is generally known; and it may be unconsciously exercised. Any quality of heart or mind possessed by the mesmerist is very readily transferred to the subject, so if he be not entirely pure, we see at once that avenues of danger open up before us. To be thrown into a trance is to give up one's individuality, and that is never a good thing in psychic experiments; but beyond and above that element of undesirability there is real danger unless we have the highest purity of thought, word and deed in our operator; and how rarely that is to be found we all know. I should never myself submit to this process; I should never advise it to any one else.

I say nothing against the practice of curative mesmerism by those who understand it; that is a totally different matter, for in that it is unnecessary to produce the trance condition. It is perfectly possible to relieve pain, to remove disease, or to pour vitality into a man by magnetic passes, without "putting him to sleep" at all. To this there can be no possible objection; yet the man who tries to do even this much would do well to acquaint himself thoroughly with the literature of the subject, for there must always remain a certain element of danger in playing, even with the noblest intentions, with forces which the operator does not understand, which to him are still abnormal forces. None of these

are plans of clairvoyant development which can be unreservedly recommended for trial by every one.

*The Better Plan.*

What, then, it may be asked, are the desirable methods, since so many are undesirable? Broadly, those which instead of suppressing the physical body by force, train the soul to control it. The surest and safest way of all is to put oneself into the hands of a competent teacher, and practise only what he advises. But where is the qualified teacher to be found? Not, assuredly, among any who advertise themselves as teachers; not among those who take money for their instruction, and offer to sell the mysteries of the universe for so many shillings or so many dollars. Knowledge can be gained now where it has always been available—at the hands of those who are adepts in this great science of the soul, the fringe of which we are beginning to touch in our deepest studies.

There has always been a great Brotherhood of the men who know, and they have always been ready to teach their lore to the right man, for it is for that very purpose that they have taken the trouble to acquire it, in order that they may be able to guide and help. How can we reach them? We cannot reach them in the physical body, and we might not even know them if it should happen to us to see them. But they can reach us, and assuredly they will reach us when they see us to be fit for the work of helping the world. Their one great interest is the furthering of evolution, the helping of humanity; they need men devoted to this work, and they are ever watching for them; so none need fear that he can be overlooked if he is ready for that work. They will never gratify mere curiosity; they will give no aid to the man who wishes to gain powers for himself alone;

but when a man has shown by long and careful training of himself, and by using for helpfulness all the power which he already possesses, that his will is strong enough and his heart pure enough to bear his part in the Divine work—then he may become conscious of their presence and their aid when he least expects it.

It is true that they founded the Theosophical Society, yet membership in the Society will not of itself be sufficient to bring a man into relationship with them—no, nor even membership in that Inner School through which the Society offers training to its more earnest members. It is true that from the ranks of the Society men have been chosen to come into closer relation with them; but none could guarantee that as a result of becoming a member, for it rests with them alone, for they see further into the hearts of men than we. But always be sure of this, you whose hearts are yearning for the higher life, for something greater than this lower world can give—they never overlook one honest effort, but always recognize it by giving through their pupils such teaching and such help as is best for the man at his stage.

In the meantime, while we are trying in every way to develop ourselves along the path of progress, there is much that we can do, if we wish, to bring this power of clairvoyance nearer within our reach. Remember that it is not in itself a sign of great development; it is only one of the signs, for man has to advance along many lines simultaneously before he can reach his goal of perfection. See how highly developed is the intellect in the great scientific man; yet perhaps he may have but little of the wonderful force which devotion gives. See the splendid devotion of the great saint of some church or religion; yet in spite of all that progress along one line he may have but little of the divine power of the

intellect. Each needs what the other has; each will have to acquire the faculty of the other before he will be perfect.

So it is evident that at present we are unequally developed; some have more in one direction, and some in another, according to the line along which each has worked most in past lives. If we particularly long for devotion in our character, by striving in that direction now we may attain much of it even in this life, and may assuredly make it a leading quality in our next life. So with intellect, so with every quality; so also with this faculty of clairvoyance. If you think it well to throw your strength into work along this line, you may do very much towards bringing these latent faculties into action. I am not speaking here of a vague possibility, but of a definite fact, for some of our own members in this Society set themselves years ago to try to train the soul along the path of permanent progress, and of those who persevered without faltering almost every one has even already found some definite result. Some have won their faculties fully, others only partially as yet, but in all cases good has come from their efforts to take themselves in hand and control their minds and emotions.

#### *How to Begin.*

If you have this desire for higher sight, take yourself in hand first in the same way; make sure first of the mental and moral development, lest you should succeed in your efforts, and gain your powers. For to possess them without having first acquired those other qualifications would be verily a curse and not a blessing, for you would then misuse them, and your last state would indeed be worse than the first. If you consider that you have made sure of yourself, and can trust yourself under

all possible circumstances to do the right for the right's sake, even against your earthly seeming interest, always to choose the utterly unselfish course of action, and to forget yourself in your love for the world, then there are at least two methods which will lead you towards clairvoyance safely, and can in no way do you harm, even though you should not succeed in your object. The first of these, though perfectly harmless and even useful, is not suited for every one; but the second is of universal application, and I have myself known both of them to be successful.

#### *The Fourth Dimension.*

This first method is a purely intellectual one, a study to which I have already on several occasions had to refer, the study of the fourth dimension of space. The physical brain has never been accustomed to act at all along those lines, and so it feels itself unable to attack such a problem. But the brain, like any other part of the physical organism, can be trained by persistent, gradual, careful effort to feats which appeared originally quite beyond its reach, and so it can be induced to understand and conceive clearly the forms of a world unlike its own. The chief apostle of the fourth dimension is Mr. C. H. Hinton, of Washington. He is not a member of our Society, but he has done many of its members an excellent piece of service in writing so clearly and luminously on his wonderful subject. In his books he tells us that he has himself succeeded in developing this power of higher conception in the physical brain, and several of our own members have followed in his footsteps.

One of these has developed astral sight simply by steadily raising the capacity of the physical brain until it contained the possibility of grasping astral form, and

thus awakening the latent astral faculty proper. It is simply a question of extending the power of receptivity until it includes the astral matter. I suppose that out of a score of men who took up this study, not more than one would succeed as well and as quickly as that; but at any rate the study is a most fascinating one for those who have a mathematical turn of mind, and where it does not bring increased faculty to see, it must at least bring wider comprehension and a broader outlook over the world, and this is no mean result, even if no other be attained. Short of absolute astral sight, it is the only method of which I know by which a clear comprehension can be gained of the appearance of astral objects, and thus a definite idea of what the astral life really is.

*Another Way.*

If that line of effort commends itself only to the few, our second method is of universal application. It also is not easy, but its practice cannot but be of the greatest use to the man. That is its great and crowning advantage; it leads a man towards these powers which he so ardently desires; but the rate at which he can move along that road depends upon the degree of his previous development in that particular way in other lives, and therefore no one can guarantee him a certain result in a certain time; yet while he is working his way onward, every step which he takes is so far an improvement, and even though he should work for the whole of his life without winning astral sight, he would nevertheless be mentally and morally and even physically the better for having tried. This is what in various religions is called the method of meditation. For the purpose of our examination of it I shall divide it into three successive steps:



concentration, meditation and contemplation; and I will explain what I mean by each of these three terms.

But remember always that to attain success, this effort must be only one side of a general development, and that it is absolutely pre-requisite for the man who would learn its secrets to live a pure and altruistic life. There is no mystery about the rules of the greater progress; the Steps of the Path of Holiness have been known to the world for ages, and in my little book *Invisible Helpers* I have given a list of them according to the teaching of the Buddha, with the characteristics which mark each of its stages. There is no difficulty in knowing what to do; the difficulty is in carrying out the directions which all religions have given.

### *Concentration.*

The first step necessary towards the attainment of the higher clairvoyance is concentration—not to gaze at a bright spot until you have no mind left, but to acquire such control over your mind that you can do with it what you will, and fix it exactly where you want to hold it for as long a period as you choose. This is not an easy task; it is one of the most difficult and arduous known to man; but it can be done, because it has been done—not once, but hundreds of times, by those whose will is strong and immovable. There may be some among us who have never thought how much beyond our control our minds usually are. Stop yourself suddenly when you are walking along the street, or when you are riding in the carriage, and see what you are thinking, and why. Try to follow the thought back to its genesis, and you will probably be surprised to find how many desultory thoughts have wandered through your brain during the previous five minutes, just dropping in and dropping out again,

and leaving almost no impression. You will gradually begin to realize that in truth all these are not your thoughts at all, but simply cast-off fragments of other people's thoughts.

The fact is that thought is a force, and every exertion of it leaves an impression behind. A strong thought about some other person goes to him, a strong thought of self clings about the thinker; but many thoughts are not by any means strong or especially pointed in any direction, and so the forms which they create are vaguely-floating and evanescent. While they last they are capable of entering into any mind that happens to come their way, and so it comes that as we walk along the road we leave a trail of feeble thought behind us, and the next man who passes that way finds these valueless fragments intruding themselves upon his consciousness. They drift into his mind, unless it is already occupied with something definite, and in the majority of cases they just drift out again, having made only the most trifling impression upon his brain; but here and there he encounters one which interests or pleases him, and then he takes that up and turns it over in his mind, so that it departs from him somewhat strengthened by the addition of a little of his mind-force to it. He has made it his own thought for a moment, and so has coloured it with his personality. Every time we enter a room we step into the midst of a crowd of thoughts, good, bad or indifferent as the case may be, but the great mass of them just a dull, purposeless fog which is hardly worth calling thought at all.

If we wish to develop any higher faculty, we must begin by gaining control over this mind of ours. We must give it some work to do, instead of just letting it play about as it will, drawing into itself all these thoughts which are not ours, which we really do not want at all.

It must not be our master but our servant before we can take the first step along the line of the true trained clairvoyance, for this is the instrument which we shall have to use, and it must be at our command and fully under our control.

This concentration is one of the hardest things for the ordinary man to do, because he has had no practice in it, and indeed scarcely realized that it needed to be done. Think what it would be if your hand were as little under your control as your mind is, if it did not obey your command, but started aside from what you wished it to do. You would feel that you had paralysis, and that your hand was useless. But if you cannot control your mind, that is dangerously like a mental paralysis; you must practise with it until you have it in hand and can use it as you wish. Fortunately concentration can be practised all day long, in the common affairs of every-day life. Whatever you are doing, do it thoroughly, and keep your mind on it. If you are writing a letter, think of your letter and of nothing else until it is finished; it will be all the better written for such care. If you are reading a book, fix your mind on it and try to grasp the author's full meaning. Know always what you are thinking about, and why; keep your mind at intelligent work, and do not leave it time to be idle, for it is in those idle moments that all evil comes.

Even now you can concentrate very perfectly when your interest is sufficiently keenly excited. Then your mind is so entirely absorbed that you hardly hear what is said to you or see what passes round you.

#### *The Courtiers and the Water-Jars.*

There is a story told in the East about some sceptical courtiers, who declined to believe that an ascetic could

ever be so occupied with his meditation as to be unaware that an army passed close by him as he sat under his tree wrapt in thought. The king, who was present, assured them that he would prove to them the possibility of this, and proceeded to do so in a truly Oriental and autocratic way. He ordered that some large water-jars should be brought and filled to the brim. Then he instructed the courtiers each to take one and carry it; and his command was that they should walk, carrying this water, through the principal streets of the city. But they were to be surrounded by his guards with drawn swords, and if one of them spilled one single drop of his water, that unfortunate was to be instantly beheaded then and there. The courtiers started on their journey filled with terror; but they all got safely back again, and the king smilingly greeted them with a request to tell him all the incidents of their walk, and describe the persons whom they had met. Not one of them could mention even one person that they had seen, for all agreed that they had been so entirely occupied with the one idea of watching the brimming jars that they had noticed nothing else of any sort. "So, gentlemen," rejoined the king, "you see that when there is sufficient interest concentration is possible."

### *Meditation.*

When you have attained concentration such as that, not under the stress of the fear of instant death, but by the exertion of your will, then you may profitably try the next stage of effort. I do not say that it will be easy; on the contrary, it is very difficult; but it can be done, for many of us have had to do it. When your mind is thus an instrument, try what we call meditation. Choose a certain fixed time for yourself, when you can be undisturbed; the early morning is in many ways the best, if

that can be managed. It is not always an easy time for us now, for we have in modern civilization hopelessly disarranged our day, so that noon is no longer its middle point, as it should be. Now we lie in bed long after the sun has risen, and then stay up injuring our eyes with artificial light long after he has set at night. But choose your time, and let it be the same time each day, and let no day pass without your regular effort. We know if we are trying any sort of physical exercise for training purposes how much more effective it is to do a little regularly than to make a violent effort one day, and then to do nothing for a week. So in this matter it is the regularity that is important.

Sit down comfortably where you will not be disturbed, and turn your mind, with all its newly-developed power of concentration, upon some selected subject demanding high and useful thought. We in our Theosophical studies have no lack of such subjects, combining deepest interest with greatest profit. If you prefer it, you can take some moral quality, as is advised by the Catholic Church when it prescribes this exercise. In that case, you would turn the quality over in your mind, see how it was an essential quality in the Divine order, how it was manifested in Nature about you, how it had been shown forth by great men of old, how you yourself could manifest it in your daily life, how (perhaps) you have failed to display it in the past, and so on. Such meditation upon a high moral quality is a very good exercise in many ways, for it not only trains the mind, but keeps the good thought constantly before you. But it needs to be preceded generally by thought upon concrete subjects, and when those are easy for you, you can usefully take up the more abstract ideas.

When this has become an established habit with you,

with which nothing is allowed to interfere; when you can manage it fairly well without any feeling of strain or difficulty, and without a single wandering thought ever venturing to intrude itself, then you may turn to the third stage of our effort—contemplation. But remember that you will not succeed with this until you have entirely conquered the mind-wandering. For a long time you will find, when you try to meditate, that your thoughts are continually going off at a tangent, and you do not know it till suddenly you start to find how far away they have gone. You must not let this dishearten you, for it is the common experience; you must simply bring the errant mind back again to its duty, a hundred or a thousand times if necessary, for the only way to succeed is to decline to admit the possibility of failure. But when you have at length succeeded, and the mind is definitely mastered, then we reach that for which all the rest has been but the necessary preparation, good though it has been in itself.

### *Contemplation.*

Instead of turning over a quality in your mind, take the highest spiritual ideal that you know. It does not matter what it is, or by what name you call it. A Theosophist would most probably take one of those Great Ones to whom we have already referred—a member of that great Brotherhood of Adepts, whom we call the Masters—especially if he had the privilege of having come directly into contact with one of them. The Catholic might take the Blessed Virgin or some patron saint, the ordinary Christian would probably take the Christ; the Hindu would perhaps choose Krishna, and the Buddhist most likely the Lord Buddha himself. Names do not matter, for we are dealing with realities now. But

it must be to you the highest, that which will evoke in you the greatest feeling of reverence, love and devotion that you are capable of experiencing. In place of your previous meditation, call up the most vivid mental image that you can make of this ideal, and, letting your most intense feeling go out towards this highest One, try with all the strength of your nature to raise yourself towards Him, to become one with Him, to be in and of that glory and beauty. If you will do that, if you will thus steadily continue to raise your consciousness, there will come a time when you will suddenly find that you are one with that ideal as you never were before, when you realize and understand Him as you never did before, for a new and wonderful light has somehow dawned for you, and all the world has changed, for now for the first time you know what it is to live, and all life before seems like darkness and death to you as compared with this.

Then it will all slip away again, and you will return to the light of common day—and darkness indeed will it appear by comparison! But go on working at your contemplation, and presently that glorious moment will come again and yet again; and each time it will stay with you longer, till there comes a period when that higher life is yours always, no longer a flash or a glimpse of paradise, but a steady glow, a new and never-ceasing marvel every day of your existence. Then for you day and night will be one continuous consciousness, one beautiful life of happy work for the helping of others; yet this, which seems so indescribable and so unsurpassable, is only the beginning of the entrance into the heritage in store for you and for every child of man. Look about you with that new and higher sight, and you will see and grasp many things which until now you have never even

suspected—unless, indeed, you have previously familiarized yourself with the investigations of your predecessors along this path.

Continue your efforts, and you will rise higher still, and in due course there will open before your astonished eyes a life as much grander than the astral as that is than the physical, and once more you will feel that the true life has been unknown to you until now; for all the while you are rising nearer to the One Life which alone is perfect Truth and perfect Beauty.

This is a development that must take years, you will say. Yes, that is probable, for you are trying to compress into one life the evolution which would normally spread itself over many; but it is far more than worth the time and the effort. No man can say how long it will take in any individual case, for that depends upon two things—the amount of crust that there is to break through, and the energy and determination that is put into the work. I could not promise you that in so many years you would certainly succeed; I can only tell you that many have tried before you, and that many have succeeded. All the great Masters of Wisdom were once men at our own level; as they have risen, so must we rise. Many of us in our humbler way have tried also, and have succeeded, some more and some less; but none who has tried regrets his attempt, for whatever he has gained, be it little or much, is gained for all eternity, since it inheres in the soul which survives death. Whatever we gain thus we possess in full power and consciousness, and have it always at our command; for this is no mediumship, no feeble intermittent trance-quality, but the power of the developed and glorified life which is to be that of all humanity some day.



*Pre-requisites.*

But the man who wishes to try to unfold these faculties within himself will be very ill-advised if he does not take care first of all to have utter purity of heart and soul, for that is the first and greatest necessity. If he is to do this, and to do it well, he must purify the mental, the astral and the physical; he must cast aside his pet vices and his physical impurities; he must cease to defile his body with meat, with alcohol or tobacco, and try to make himself pure and clean all through, on this lower plane as well as on the higher ones. If he does not think it worth while to give up petty uncleannesses for the higher life, that is exclusively his own affair; it was said of old that one could not serve God and Mammon simultaneously. I do not say that bad habits on the physical plane will prevent him altogether from any psychic development, but I do very emphatically and distinctly say that the man who remains unclean is never free from danger, and that to touch holy things with impure hands is to risk a terrible peril.

The man who would try for the higher must free his mind from worry and from lower cares; while doing his duty to the uttermost, he must do it impersonally and for the right's sake, and leave the result in the hands of higher powers. So will he draw round him pure and helpful entities as he moves onward, and will himself radiate sunlight on those in suffering or in sorrow. So shall he remain master of himself, pure and clean and unselfish, using his new powers never for a personal end, but ever for the advancement and the succour of men his brothers, that they also, as they can, may learn to live the wider life, may learn to rise from amid the mists of

ignorance and selfishness into the glorious sunlight of the peace of God.

Take up this study of Theosophy then, not on blind faith—for blind faith has done enough harm in the world already—but for enquiry; if you are not satisfied, there is no harm done, while if you are satisfied, much good may come to you thereby, as it has come to the rest of us. The best way of all to see whether this thing is so, is to act as if it were true; live the life which it teaches, and note its effects. Try the thought-control which it recommends, and see whether you are the better or the worse for it. Try to realize the unity and brotherhood which it teaches, and to show the unselfishness which it exacts; and then see for yourself whether this is an improvement upon other modes of living or not. It still remains true now, as in days of old, that they that do the will of the Father that is in heaven, they shall know of the doctrine, whether it be true. The surest way to find the truth is to live the life; try the unselfishness and the watchful helpfulness, and see whether here is not an opening into new fields of happiness and usefulness. From that go on gradually to other parts of the teaching, and you will find evidence enough. Think what the world would be if all held these doctrines of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; would it be better, or would it be worse, if all mankind held unity as a fact, and unselfishness as a duty? As yet we are only at the beginning of this mightiest of studies; yet we say to you with utmost confidence, come and join us in our study, and to you also will come the peace and confidence that has come to us, so that through your study of Theosophy your lives shall become happier to yourselves and more useful to your fellow-men.

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# THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

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## OBJECTS.

- To form a nucleus of the universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
  - To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
  - To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.
- 

Any person desiring information as to the Theosophical Society is invited to communicate with any one of the following General Secretaries:

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the above objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of good-will whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high

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**THEOSOPHY** is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway of a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the science of the spirit, teaching man to know the spirit as himself, and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

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